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The Abate Metastasio.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

ABATE METASTASIO.

IN WHICH ARE INCORPORATED,

TRANSLATIONS

OF HIS

PRINCIPAL LETTERS.

By CHARLES BURNEY, Mus. D. F. R. S.

Omniaque ejus non ſolum facta, ſed etiam dicta meminiſſet.

Cic. Somn. Scip.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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M.DCC.XCVI.

PREFACE.

TO wiſh for information concerning ſuch benefactors as have greatly contributed to our inſtruction or amuſement, is a natural curioſity, which has gratitude for its baſis. And the lovers of Italian Poetry, as well as vocal Muſic, (if I may judge of the feelings of others by my own) regard Metaſtaſio as the primary ſource of their moſt exquiſite delight in the union of thoſe arts. But this poet has ſtill higher claims on our reverence and affection, from his innoxious life and moral character, which give a kind of dignity to innocent pleaſures, and to humanity.

The life and writings of Metaſtaſio have been ſo much connected with that art, upon the ſtudy and hiſtory of which, ſo great a portion of my own life has been ſpent, that his Letters ſeemed to furniſh neceſſary materials to the completion of my muſical annals. Indeed, if theſe letters had come to my hands previous to the publication of my *General Hiſtory*, ſeveral points relative to the progreſs of the muſical drama would have been illuſtrated from them. But, beſides their intimate connection with muſic and its profeſſors, I found in them ſo many pleaſing, beautiful, and new ſentiments, on other ſub-

jects, written in a ſtyle ſo ſuperior in elegance, grace, and facility, to any other Italian proſe with which I am acquainted, that I wiſhed to recommend them to the ſtudents and lovers of Italian literature in general, as models of familiar letters, and of eaſy and elegant proſe.

The admirers of a foreign dramatic poet, of whoſe productions none have been well tranſlated, except a few by my worthy friend, Mr. Hoole, cannot be very numerous, nor is it likely that a *general* curioſity concerning his life and writings will now be excited. However, as a POET of refined taſte and ſentiments, and a MAN poſſeſſed of every moral and ſocial virtue that embelliſhes ſociety, and exalts human nature, his conduct and opinions deſerve diſplay, as much as his literary abilities admiration.

The poſthumous publication of his private letters, which during many years of his life had been copied previous to their departure for the place of their deſtination, by a young Italian ſettled at Vienna, as an exerciſe in his own language, will enable me in the courſe of theſe Memoirs to let the poet ſpeak for himſelf on many ſubjects, concerning which it is natural for a curious reader to wiſh to know his genuine ſentiments.

The incidents in his life, anterior to his arrival at the capital of Germany, will be given from authentic accounts, publiſhed by his countrymen

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in Italy ſince his deceaſe, and which, from their ſingularity, and the myſtery in which they were long involved, ſeemed in want of indiſputable vouchers to render them credible.

There are few circumſtances relative to his ſubſequent life and writings, but what may be gathered from his works themſelves, particularly his epiſtolary correſpondence, which from a few of his private letters, that, in defiance of all his ſolicitude to keep from the preſs, the vanity of his friends had made public, were long wiſhed for by his countrymen (*a*).

The hiſtory of a hero, is to be found in his *public* tranſactions; and that of a man of letters, in his *private* correſpondence. The moſt authentic and ſatisfactory hiſtory of Cicero, is to be gathered from his *Epiſtolæ Familiares*, or private

(*a*) It is ſaid in his *Eloge* by ANDREA RUBBI, of the Academy of Sciences at Mantua, written two months after the Poet's deceaſe, and printed at Venice, that, "in his letters to his friends he diſſeminated that ſweet urbanity which his heart never failed to furniſh. Oh, what a precious gift it would be to the world, if ſome benefactor to mankind would publiſh them! Whatever is now ſaid of his heart, would be then demonſtrated. From the few that have been ſeen, we may imagine the reſt to be replete with morality, friendſhip, gratitude, ſound criticiſm, ſage counſel, and religious ſentiments. Where can we find in Italy a ſeries of modern letters which would furniſh ſuch uſeful, ſuch delightful leſſons to inexperienced youth? We look towards them with eager expectation, and hope they will ſoon be in our poſſeſſion."

Elogj Italiani, Tomo 1mo.

letters, not intended for publication; the letters of Eraſmus compoſe the beſt part of Dr. Jortin's Life of that honeſt and learned divine; as the letters of Petrarch do of his Memoirs by the Abbé de Sade; and above all, the letters of Gray, ingeniouſly incorporated by his friend Mr. Maſon in his Memoirs, which have always appeared to me the moſt agreeable ſpecies of biography that has ever been publiſhed. Dr. Johnſon, in his admirable Lives of our Poets, though his opinions concerning the merit of ſome of them are diſputed, and have never ſatisfied my own mind, has manifeſted ſuch powers of intellect, and profound critical knowledge, as will probably ſettle the national opinion on many ſubjects of literature upon an immoveable foundation. Indeed his biographical ſketches are more confined to diſcriminative criticiſm on the works of our poets, than their manners and private life; but of Metaſtaſio, whoſe writings are well known to breathe the moſt noble ſentiments, and pureſt morality, we wiſhed to know how his private life correſponded with his public principles. And how could this be better diſcovered by a foreigner, at the diſtance of London from Vienna, than by his Letters? His countrymen, the Italians, almoſt equally diſtant from his reſidence during more than fifty years of his exiſtence, ſeem to know as little concerning his private life, as we do in England, except from his letters; few

of

of which were publiſhed, when moſt of his biographers went to work.

The lives of the poet, that have been attempted, and the public orations and eulogies that were compoſed and pronounced upon him in the literary academies of Italy, by men of the firſt eminence for learning and ſcience, before and after his deceaſe, are innumerable. His countrymen, in poſſeſſion of theſe, may have their curioſity ſufficiently gratified; but as the preſent work is intended to convey to Engliſh readers ſome idea of the genius and moral worth of this extraordinary man, I ſhall give them, from his beſt biographers and eulogiſts that I have been able to procure, the moſt prominent features of his character, as far as they agree with what I ſaw and heard at Vienna, in my viſits to the Imperial Laureat, and enquiries concerning him, of his friends and moſt intimate acquaintance.

The Firſt biographical eſſay that appeared after the poet's deceaſe, was *A Compendium of the Life of the celebrated Imperial Laureat*, PIETRO METASTASIO, written in German, *for the uſe of his future Biographers*, by JOSEPH REZER. This was publiſhed at Vienna, in 1782, in an 8vo pamphlet of only 53 pages. It was ſoon after tranſlated into Italian, and publiſhed likewiſe in Vienna: a different tranſlation, in Italian, appeared at Rome in 1783; and from this ſmall tract, the principal traits of his perſon and character

ſeem to have been drawn, by his ſubſequent panegyriſts and biographers.

II. *Elogio di* PIETRO METASTASIO, written by ANDREA RUBBI, 1782, two months after the Poet's death, and publiſhed at Venice in the 1ſt. vol. of *Elogj Italiani*, in 12 vols. 8vo. This is a continued rhapſody of praiſe and admiration, which required all the intrinſic merit, worth, and fame of Metaſtaſio, to render palatable. The biographical information is traditional, and the annotations are ſo injudiciouſly ſelected, as, if authentic, to confute the chief part of his perſonal praiſe. But this writer, who repeats ſuch wild and incredible goſſipping ſtories concerning the poet's *prejudices*, is the greateſt enthuſiaſt for his virtues and benignity of heart, of all his panegyriſts.

III. *Elogio dell'* Abate PIETRO METASTASIO, read at a general meeting of the Arcadian Academy at Rome, in Auguſt, 1782, by the Abate TARUFFI. None of the panegyriſts or biographers of the poet were ſo well acquainted with his public works and private life as this eulogiſt, who had reſided many years at Vienna, as Auditor and Secretary of Legation to the Pope's Nuncio, and who enjoyed the friendſhip of Metaſtaſio in the moſt intimate and confidential manner. A man of ſound learning, and unerring judgment and taſte in literature and the fine arts.

IV. STORIA,

IV. STORIA, or History of the dramatic Poet, PIETRO TRAPASSI Abate METASTASIO, illustrated with notes, and many of his letters; written by Captain MARC ANTONIO ALUIGI. In Assisi, 1783, 8vo. 170 pages.

This is one of the most considerable, in length, of any of the lives that have been written of our bard. The author has taken great pains in collecting all the information which he could procure from the poet's works, and from tradition; but having had no personal knowledge of him, nor ever been in the list of his correspondents, his information is neither new nor well authenticated.

V. *Elogio di* PIETRO METASTASIO, published in a work entitled *Elogj d'alcuni illustri Italiani*. Eulogies, or characters of illustrious Italians, by Monsignor ANGELO FABBRONI, Bishop of Pisa, 1784, 8vo. 98 pages.

This learned prelate was long in correspondence with Metastasio, and solicited his permission to write his life, and assistance in furnishing materials, previous to his decease; to which request the poet's negative will be found in the course of his Letters.

There are many just reflections and critical remarks in this *Eloge*, but the biographical part is chiefly copied from *Rezer*.

VI. *Vita o sia storia*, The Life or History of the Abate Peter Metastasio, Cæsarean Poet. Venice, printed by *Zatta*, 1784, and prefixed to the edition

edition of the Poet's works, copied from that of Paris. Anonymous. It has, however, been ſaid by the editor of the *Nice* edition, to have been written by the late Abate GIOVAN FRANCESCO ALTANESI, in his latter days, of which he gives the following ſevere, but juſt, character. "This work is rendered inſufferable by a heap of ſtrange and inapplicable quotations, by pedantry, and by the blunders with which it abounds, copied from another life which was publiſhed by *Aluigi*, in 1783.

VII. *Memorie per ſervire alla vita*—Memoirs towards a Life of Metaſtaſio, collected by Saverio Mattei, 8vo. Naples, 1785.

Theſe Memoirs were publiſhed with an *Eloge* on JOMELLI, or an Eſſay on the progreſs of Theatrical Poetry and Muſic, by the ſame author. Sig. Sav. Mattei is not only poſſeſſed of deep and extenſive learning, but abilities as a poet, and great knowledge and good taſte in muſic; concerning which he ſeems to have heard, read, and meditated, more than any man of letters in Italy. He rather points out in this tract, in a looſe and irregular way, juſt as recollection dictates, materials for other biographers, than attempts a regular life of his friend and correſpondent Metaſtaſio himſelf. However, his diſjointed materials are all uſeful, and many of them ſuch as are no where elſe to be found.

VIII. *Raggionamento*, or a Diſcourſe by John

Baptiſt Moreſchi, in praiſe of Peter Metaſtaſio, read at a meeting of the Academy *degli Fervidi* in Bologna, 1786. This diſcourſe, prefixed to the firſt volume of Metaſtaſio's Letters, is a florid analyſis of his dramas, abounding in enthuſiaſtic encomiums, but contains no anecdotes or biographical information concerning the poet's life and manners. It is, however, not devoid of eloquence.

IX. *Vita dell' Abate* PIETRO METASTASIO, *ſcritta dell' Avocato* CARLO CRISTINI. In this life, written by the Editor of the complete edition of all Metaſtaſio's Works, in twenty vols. 12mo. with two volumes of Remarks and Obſervations on his dramatic productions, publiſhed at Nice, in 1785 and 1786, the author ſeems judiciouſly to have availed himſelf of the labours of all his predeceſſors; having compiled a life from the information obtained by the reſearches of others, not from a perſonal acquaintance or correſpondence with the poet, nor any new ſources of information, except what he procured at Naples from Signor Mattei. This is doubtleſs the moſt ample and ſatisfactory life of Metaſtaſio which I have ſeen, occupying 214 pages of the firſt volume of the edition to which it is prefixed.

The author of this life has done me the honour to refer ſeveral times to my *German Tour*: once, indeed, to point out a miſtake, which I ſhall here moſt readily acknowledge and correct.

At

At the time of my viſiting Vienna, ten years before the deceaſe of Metaſtaſio, the hiſtory of the early part of his life was very imperfectly known; and the *bequeſt of a friend* had been traditionally handed about, inſtead of that of the *Romanina*, which is now univerſally known and allowed. The ſtory had been told me by a perſon of high rank, whoſe information, in other reſpects, has ſtood the teſt of the ſtricteſt examination; but at this time, even the Abate Taruffi, Metaſtaſio's countryman and intimate friend, was unacquainted with the Will of the Romanina, and ſeemed to credit the ſtory which was then in circulation concerning Metaſtaſio's generoſity to the relations of a deceaſed friend.

At the time of Metaſtaſio's deceaſe, there were ſix capital editions of his works in the preſs, and innumerable have been the editions ſince, to moſt of which a life of the author is prefixed, which has been conſulted, though unprofitably, in hopes of new information. Indeed my beſt reſources of information have flowed from the poſthumous publication of the five volumes of his letters, which firſt appeared with the complete edition of his poetical works at Nice, 1786, but without the leaſt attention to chronology. The principal of theſe, however, I have arranged, tranſlated, and interwoven in the Memoirs: making the poet, as often as

poſſible, ſpeak for himſelf, and relate his own ſtory.

I might add, as an advantage to myſelf, at leaſt, if not to my enterprize, that I had a perſonal acquaintance with ſeveral of the Poet's correſpondents; ſuch as Padre Martini, Haſſe, Jomelli, and Farinelli; that I am in poſſeſſion of the works of moſt of his literary friends, to whom his letters are preſerved; and was a ſtranger to the perſon or talents of but few of the opera compoſers or ſingers that are occaſionally mentioned in his correſpondence.

But ſtill hoping for farther information, and unwilling to ſhrink from any pains, or leave untried any poſſible means of procuring it, I ventured to addreſs a letter to his eleve and executrix, the accompliſhed *Mademoiſelle Martines*, at Vienna, telling her of my deſign, and ſpecifying all the materials which I had been able to collect for its accompliſhment. At the ſame time entreating her to inform me whether it would be poſſible to augment them by public books or private anecdotes? And had the ſatisfaction of being aſſured by this lady (the perſon beſt qualified to anſwer my queſtion) after peruſing the liſt of books which I had procured previous to writing the life of Metaſtaſio, that "ſhe could recollect no others; nor could thoſe "of whom ſhe had enquired."

"They

"They have been printing here *, (she adds) "ever since the month of June, 1794, the genuine letters of Metastasio to his friends, and "other particular pieces, of which I send you a "catalogue, and which I have ceded to a young "physician, Dr. *Lewis Careno* by name, an Italian, settled here with great reputation in "medicine and literature; he intends to make "three editions at the same time, two in the "form of that of Paris, 1780, and one in that "of Venice of 1781.

"The first volume has left the press ever since "October, 1794, and the second is near finish-"ed; so that towards the month of April next (Mademoiselle Martines's letter is dated January 25th 1795), "all the three volumes will "appear under the title of "*Opere postume dell'* "*Abate* PIETRO METASTASIO, Vienna, 1795." "In the first will be found a manuscript well "worthy of the author: *Osservazioni da me fatte* "*sulle Tragedie e Commedie Greche*, which takes up "a third part of that volume; then begin the "selected letters. In the next volume, the let-"ters are continued; and the third will contain "letters and billets written by the late empress "MARIA TERESA, and little poetical pieces "collected from his writings. The impression "will be executed with the utmost elegance and "neatness. For your further information, I have

* At Vienna.

"inclosed

" incloſed a copy of the Printer's advertiſe-
" ment.

" I would be more circumſtantial to you with
" regard to the Bard; but that I ſee you are
" furniſhed with the beſt books concerning him,
" and may draw thence a deal of information.
" If in any thing elſe I may be of ſervice to
" you, it will give me a true ſatisfaction, as it
" does to aſſure you of that real eſteem with
" which I am, Sir,

" Your moſt humble ſervant,

" MARIANNE MARTINES."

This extract, *literally* copied from the original letter with which I have been favoured, I could not reſiſt inſerting in my Preface; not only for the information it will afford the admirers of Metaſtaſio concerning the three additional volumes of his works, printed in 4to, 8vo, and 12mo, to ſuit any edition of his former writings of which they may be in poſſeſſion, but as a ſpecimen of the marvellous accuracy with which this ingenious lady is able to write in a language, which ſhe has acquired at the diſtance of a thouſand miles from our Iſland!

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE ABATE

PIETRO METASTASIO.

SECTION I.

PIETRO TRAPASSO, the ſecond ſon of Felice Trapaſſo of Aſiſi, and Franceſca Galaſti of Bologna, was born at Rome, Jan. 6th, 1698, in the pariſh of Santi Lorenzo & Damaſo, where he was baptiſed the 19th of the ſame month, by Card. Ottoboni.

His father, though deſcended from a family in Aſiſi which had long enjoyed the privileges of free-citizens; but which, by a gradual decline, was reduced to poverty, not being able

to ſubſiſt in the place of his birth, liſted for a ſoldier in the regiment of Corſi, and ſoon after married Franceſca Galaſti, by whom he had many children beſides the Poet.

While he was in garriſon, to the ſmall pay of a ſoldier, he added ſomething towards the maintenance of his family, by becoming an Amanuenſis. And at length, having ſerved the uſual time, and by extreme induſtry and œconomy ſaved a little money, he entered into partnerſhip with a ſhop-keeper at Rome, for the ſale of goods which belong to what the Romans call *l'arte bianca*, conſiſting of oil, flower, paſtry, and other culinary materials.

And having been ſomewhat proſperous in this kind of merchandiſe, he placed his two eldeſt ſons, Leopoldo, and Pietro, at a Grammar-ſchool. The latter diſcovered an extraordinary quickneſs and diſpoſition for literature, and a violent paſſion for poetry, with a power of making verſes, extempore, on any given ſubject, before he was ten years old (*a*).

This

(*a*) This ſpecies of inſpiration, allowed to the *improviſatori* of Italy, was long doubted in England by thoſe who had never croſſed the Alps, till the arrival of the celebrated TALASSI in our country about ten years ago; when

This faculty he was habituated to exerciſe, after ſchool hours, at his father's ſhop, where great crowds uſed to aſſemble in the ſtreet of an evening to hear the young Trapaſſi ſing, *all'improviſta*; who, beſides the harmony of his numbers, was gifted with the melody of a fine voice. During one of theſe tuneful *fits*, the learned civilian GRAVINA having accidentally paſſed that way, was ſtruck with the ſweetneſs of the child's voice, and ſtill more with his verſes, which he ſoon found were extempore, and either upon perſons who ſtood near him, or on playful ſubjects of their ſuggeſting.

Gravina was ſo aſtoniſhed and pleaſed at the precocity of the little bard's talents, that he ſtopt to careſs, and converſe with him, offering him money for his performance, which however the child modeſtly declined to accept. This ſo much increaſed the civilian's admiration, that he inſtantly conceived a wiſh to adopt him, for the pleaſure of cultivating a ſoil which nature had rendered ſo fertile, that even the ſpontaneous flowers and fruits it produced were of a ſuperior

when the moſt obſtinate infidels were converted to the faith, and obliged to confeſs the reality of the art.

 kind.

kind. Without hesitation he therefore applied to his parents, soliciting them to transfer to him the care of their son's education, promising to become not only his preceptor, but father.

As the child was still to remain at Rome, and no cruel preliminary was mentioned, by which his natural parents were prohibited from seeing him and cherishing reciprocal affection, *Felix* was too wise, and zealous for the welfare of his son, to refuse the proffered patronage; and the next morning *Pietro* was conducted by his father and mother to the house of Gravina, and wholly consigned to his care and protection.

Our young bard was now, from the legitimate child of a shop-keeper, become the adopted son of a man of letters. And as his learned patron was partial to Greek literature, and wished to implant in the mind of the young Roman a respect and reverence for ancient lore, he translated his name into Greek: calling him METASTASIO, instead of *Trapassi*; as Μεταστασις, MUTATIO, seemed at once to express his former name of *Trapasso*, and his new situation as an adopted child.

And

And having changed his name, he undertook the more difficult taſk of changing, or at leaſt, enlarging, his mental faculties, and at the ſame time that he was ſtudying the learned languages, and imbuing his mind with the ſciences, he wiſhed to make him an orator rather than a poet, and determined that he ſhould ſtudy the Law as a profeſſion; that, and Divinity, being the only two roads by which a man of learning could arrive at honours and dignity in Rome. Poets, indeed, were rewarded with barren praiſe and acclamation, but wealth and affluence were ſtrangers to their doors.

Yet while he was obliged to read the dry books of the Law, and to hear the wrangling and jargon of the bar, his natural paſſion never quitted him, but

> True as the needle to the Polar ſtar
> Which nightly guides the advent'rous mariner,
> Its glowing influence pointed out the way
> Through flow'ry paths of poetry to ſtray.

And however he was oſtenſibly occupied by other ſtudies, he found time, by ſtealth, to read the great models of the art, of which ſays an Italian writer, "he ſucked the ſweet, and devoured the ſubſtance." Indeed he was as much in diſguiſe in the

robes of the Forum, as Achilles in thoſe of a female. At the names of Homer and Arioſto, which were his favourite poets, he was unable to contain himſelf; and Gravina diſcovering, in ſpite of his pupil's determination to conform implicitly to his will, that this excluſive paſſion for poetry was inſuperable, at length permitted him to read thoſe poets which he himſelf thought not only the beſt, but the only models of perfection. At the age of fourteen, during the early period of this indulgence, Metaſtaſio produced his Tragedy of *Giuſtino*, conformable to the rigour of all the rules of the ancient Greek dramatic writers, with which his learned preceptor had ſupplied him. But he *liſped* the *numbers* of the dry and formal ſcenes of this *Coup d'Eſſai* in a manner which he afterwards diſliked in proportion to the pains he had taken to walk the ſtage in Greek buſkins. We have his own opinion of this production in a letter written to Signor Calſabigi, in which he ſays: "I ſhould have wiſhed that none of my early productions, which ſavour too much of adoleſcence, might have appeared in the Paris edition, particularly the Tragedy of *Giuſtino*, written at fourteen years of

age: when the authority of my illuſtrious maſter did not ſuffer me to move a ſtep from the moſt religious imitation of the Greeks; and when my inexperience and want of diſcernment were unable to diſtinguiſh gold from lead, even in thoſe mines themſelves, of which he then began to diſplay to me the treaſures." Atto II. Sc. 4. of this Tragedy is finely written, and abounding in profound ſentiments. There are choruſes *à la Grec*, and airs *all'Italienne*, at the end of each act; but of which (as there are five acts) theſe airs and choruſes *only* could have been ſung *(b)*. *Cleone*, the ſooth-ſayer, pleads his cauſe very ably for an advocate at fourteen, to the fair widow Aſteria, Atto III. Sc. 5. The three firſt acts are mild and unimpaſſioned; but the fourth, is all diſtreſs and agitation. An incident occurs in this act ſimilar to that in Shakſpeare's Romeo and Juliet, where Romeo, ſuppoſing Juliet dead, drinks poiſon, which he has ſcarcely ſwallowed when ſhe revives: Thus Sophia, ſuppoſing Juſtin to have been

(b) It does not appear that this Tragedy was ever performed as an Opera. The drama of the ſame name, ſet by Handel and brought out in 1737, is founded on a very different hiſtorical fact.

irrecoverably drowned, takes a fatal draught; but is ſoon after informed that he is recovered.

It ſeems ſomewhat inconſiſtent, that Gravina, whoſe firſt impreſſions in favour of his young pupil were the effects of his premature genius for poetry, ſhould check his progreſs in that art, in favour of another ſtudy for which he had no paſſion or uncommon diſpoſition; but thinking more of his future fortune than fame, he chained him to legiſlation, pandects, edicts, decrees, codes, rolls, and every ſpecies of advocation* that was likely to contribute to his profeſſional knowledge and advancement.

But after producing the Tragedy of Giuſtino upon Gravina's favourite Greek model, the learned civilian ſeems not only to have tolerated, but encouraged his pupil's adoration of the muſes; and at eighteen carried him to Naples expreſsly to afford him an opportunity of ſinging extempore with the moſt celebrated Improviſatori of Italy at that time. Metaſtaſio, in a letter to Algarotti

* Alas! my thrice gentle Caſſio;
My *advocation* is not now in tune.

SHAKSP. OTHELLO.

written

written in 1757, gives the following account of this poetical contention. "It is your wiſh to have ſpecimens of the verſes which I made extempore, during my childhood; but how can I poſſibly gratify this wiſh? I do not deny but that a natural talent for harmony and the muſes, was diſcovered in me, that was thought ſomewhat uncommon, and more early than uſual, that is, at ten or eleven years old; that this phenomenon ſo dazzled my great maſter Gravina, that he was partial to it, and cheriſhed me as a ſoil worthy of his cultivation: and that ſo late as the year 1716, he exhibited me to ſpeak verſes, God knows how, for the benefit of Georgio Lorentino, upon all kinds of ſubjects, at which time I had for competitors the illuſtrious Rolli, Vagnini, and the Cavalier Perfetti, men who were then arrived at full maturity, and veterans in Pindaric battles."

And it is related by his biographers, that in this very year of his age, he ſung, *all' improviſta*, at Naples, forty octave ſtanzas on a ſubject propoſed to him by one of the audience, which was *the magnificence of princes*, and he was heard with wonder and rapture by all the learned preſent. They admired the fecundity of his ideas, the ſublimity

blimity of his conceptions, the flights of his fancy, and the facility and neatneſs of his expreſſion. Indeed he became in that city, the general and favourite ſubject of literary academies and aſſemblies of good taſte and polite converſation; where nothing was repeated but the favourite verſes which he had ſung extempore, and which were remembered by thoſe who had heard them from his own mouth: on theſe occaſions, the order, clearneſs, and learning, with which he treated the ſubjects, as well as the beauty of his verſes, the ſweetneſs of his voice, the grace of his action, his modeſt deportment, and the expreſſion of his countenance, were univerſally extolled. By theſe excellencies, joined to his fine features and great natural dignity, he became the idol of all who heard and ſaw him; and the love of his preceptor, Gravina, encreaſed with his years, as the genius and gratitude of his pupil rendered him every day more and more ſatisfied with his own diſcernment in ſelecting and adopting him.

With his poetical ſtudies Metaſtaſio ſtill continued to purſue thoſe of the law, and in order to obtain a paſſport through the two moſt promiſing roads to preferment at Rome,

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he cheriſhed alſo a hope of riſing in the church; aſſumed the clerical habit, and took the minor orders of prieſthood; not indeed, ſay the Italian writers of his life, from any partiality for that profeſſion, but by the advice of his affectionate maſter, as the moſt likely means of obtaining honour and emoluments.

At twenty years of age he had the misfortune to loſe his learned preceptor and patron, Gravina, who died in 1718, aged fifty-four. It has been doubted whether this event, which his heart inclined him to regard as the greateſt calamity, was not a fortunate circumſtance for his fame. Metaſtaſio, whoſe writings evince him to have been all tenderneſs, gratitude and diſintereſted ſenſibility, bewailed this misfortune with the deepeſt affliction; and in the Elegy called *La Strada della Gloria*, written on this occaſion, and read at a full aſſembly of the members of the arcadian academy founded by Gravina, he gave a public teſtimony of his ſorrow and gratitude, expreſſive of thoſe noble ſentiments, which he cheriſhed and practiſed to the end of his life. Nor did the beneficent will of his maſter, diminiſh his grief or dry his tears, though when opened it

was

was found to have been made in 1717, and that he had appointed him his heir.

By this liberal act, he verified his promise to the parents of Metastasio, of treating him as his own child. The advantage to his talents and to the lovers of poetry, which is supposed to have been derived from this early loss of his learned tutor, was the opportunity it afforded his genius, to free itself from the trammels of Grecian rules and servile imitation. But though in his dramas he has more pathos, poetry, nature, and facility, than we are now able to find in the ancient Greek tragedians, yet his early study of them certainly elevated his ideas and style, and taught him how to shun the vulgarity and absurdities with which the early popular dramatists of most countries abound. He may be said to write with classic elegance, though he had liberated himself from classic chains.

Gravina rendered his name more celebrated by educating and forming the taste of Metastasio, than by all the productions of his own pen. This learned civilian was born in the diocese of Cosenza, in the Pontificate of Innocent XI. and was called to Rome

Rome and honoured with a profeſſional chair, as a doctor of laws, at the Univerſity *della Sapienza*. He had many friends by whom he was ſincerely loved and reſpected; but he had likewiſe many enemies, who tried to depreſs and mortify him in their writings. The celebrated ſatires of *Quintus Settanus* were all written againſt him, under the feigned name of *Filodemo*. They are extremely bitter; but it is imagined that Gravina brought ſeverity upon himſelf, by his rough treatment of others in his critical writings, where he neither ſpared the ingenious nor the learned, any more than the dull and the ignorant. His works conſiſt of his *Poetics*, or *la Ragion Poetica*; a treatiſe on tragedy publiſhed by Metaſtaſio, and four tragedies, entitled *Palamedes*, *Andromeda*, *Appius Claudius*, and *Servius Tullius*, which could not have been written by Sophocles himſelf in a more Grecian ſtyle. But the moſt celebrated of all his profeſſional productions, is entitled *Originum Juris, libri tres*, the moſt learned work which has appeared on that ſubject, and which is ſtill much read and ſtudied by proficients in the law. He left behind him the character of but a moderate poet and orator, though

poſſeſſed

poſſeſſed of great learning and claſſical knowledge. Gravina's bequeſt to Metaſtaſio conſiſted of 15,000 Roman crowns, between three and four thouſand pounds ſterling in money, a ſum, ſays his anonymous biographer, not contemptible, if he had known as well how to keep as deſerve it. But the muſes are no great friends to œconomy: and poet and parſimony in the vocabulary of Apollo have a very oppoſite ſignification. Beſides the ſpecie, he left him an excellent library, and a great quantity of rich furniture, with three ſmall places, of which he had put him in poſſeſſion before his deceaſe, and a little eſtate in the kingdom of Naples.

Metaſtaſio's reſpect and gratitude for his preceptor and benefactor, will appear in ſo many of the letters which will be inſerted in the courſe of theſe Memoirs, that we ſhall only here cite from a letter to his brother Leopold, a paſſage in which the good ſenſe and ſound judgment, as well as affection for his mental maſter, appear in a ſtrong light.

" The Abate Molinari informs me, that a pious eccleſiaſtic has written the life of our excellent Gravina, which he intends to publiſh. And I underſtand, that it is his inten-

intention particularly to exculpate him from the charge of irreligion, falſely aſcribed to him by ſome of his enemies. I am extremely grateful to any one who manifeſts partiality for a man to whom I owe ſo much. But, between ourſelves, I fear this zeal is now out of ſeaſon. All rivalry is at an end; and the republic of letters now only remembers the fame which his learned labours have merited. So that an apology at this time would only inform the world of what at preſent it is wholly ignorant: that ſome doubts were once entertained concerning the orthodoxy of this great man. Try to get acquainted with the good eccleſiaſtic, and if poſſible to ſee his work. And after due praiſe and acknowledgements for his intentions, communicate to him, with all poſſible humility, my doubts of the expediency of ſuch a publication. But do it gently: for if the author expects much applauſe or profit from his work, he will not eaſily be prevailed on to relinquiſh it."

Our poet is now become a free agent, maſter of himſelf, and a deſpotic prince over no inconſiderable fortune. His converſation and verſes had too much excellence to want admirers. And his table was

too

too well ſerved to be in want of gueſts. He now wholly quitted the dry ſtudy of the law, and devoted himſelf and his fortune to the muſes and his friends. There was no poetical aſſembly in which he did not read ſome new production: as our Garrick in the early part of his life was found wherever lovers of theatrical amuſements were aſſembled. Stimulated by the applauſe which every piece univerſally received, Metaſtaſio thought of nothing but how to have it renewed by another compoſition. The love of praiſe is an infirmity to which the beſt minds are perhaps the moſt ſubject. During this intoxication, not a thought ſeems to have been beſtowed on his preſent finances or future fortune. If he reflected at all during theſe times of diſſipation, it was on the number of his friends and admirers, and the certainty of patronage whenever he ſhould want it. What his predeceſſor Petrarca has ſaid of the temple of love, was ſtill more applicable to that of fortune, by Metaſtaſio.

Errori, ſogni, ed immagini ſmorte
Eran d'intorno all'arco trionfale,
E falſe opinioni in ſu le porte,
E lubrico ſperar ſu per le ſcale *.

* Petrar. trionf. d'Amore.

Error

Errors and Dreams and Thoughts half form'd abound,
And crowd the baſeleſs fabric all around;
While at the threſhold falſe Opinions ſtand,
And on the ſteps, vain Hope, with magic wand.

Thoſe whom the poet's young imagination had dignified with the title of friends, were only indulging their love of poetry and good cheer, at his expence. Among all the leſſons of literature and ſcience, which his learned and liberal patron had taught him, he ſeems to have forgotten thoſe of worldly wiſdom. And in pointing out to his genius and diligence the means of meriting the property he left him, he wholly neglected to tell him how to preſerve it, and that the flattery of the poor and the rich is alike ſelfiſh: the one for profit, and the other for pleaſure. And indeed it is ſaid, that during this time, among his moſt ardent admirers at Rome, beſides thoſe who profited from his bounty, there were many perſons of the higheſt rank and authority, who ſeemed proud of being thought his patrons and protectors. But the zeal of theſe cooled in proportion as he became likely to want their protection; and what Pliny has ſaid of the Cinnamon tree, ſeems applicable to the great

in general, *corticis, in quo ſumma gratiæ,* nothing but the bark, the mere *outſide,* is of any value. For want of theſe inſtructions, his patron's legacy was ſoon diſſipated; not in the ſupport of vice, but moſtly in munificence and good cheer. Many of his fugitive pieces were produced during this period, particularly his ſonnet on the celebrated Gaſparini, in 1719, (the year after his patron's death) when that elegant and pleaſing compoſer was in the height of his favour at Rome. Many of his cantatas, canzonets, and ſonnets were produced even at a more early period *(c)*.

Finding himſelf in two years time wholly reduced to his two ſmall Roman places, his little Neapolitan poſſeſſions, and his library, he went to Naples with the firm reſolution of ſeriouſly reſuming the ſtudy of the law. Being arrived in that city 1720, he placed himſelf under the guidance of an advocate of the name of *Paglietti,* earneſtly entreating his aſſiſtance in the ſtudy of juriſprudence, and promiſing on his own part, to ſecond the in-

(c) See Hiſt. Muſ. vol. iv.

ſtructions

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ſtructions which he ſhould receive with all poſſible diligence and docility *(d)*. *Paglietti* was one of the moſt eminent lawyers at that time in the city of Naples; but ſo rigorous a diſciplinarian, and ſo totally devoted to his profeſſion, that he not only deſpiſed but abſolutely hated every ſpecies of ornamental knowledge or literature. Poetry was therefore ranked by him among the moſt deadly ſins of which an advocate could poſſibly be guilty. Indeed it was to him an object of ſuch horror, that he trembled at the mere mention of it. It is natural therefore to ſuppoſe that *Paglietti*, devoid of all taſte for the arts of elegance, which help to humanize and poliſh our ſavage nature, was rough, ſour, and forbidding in his addreſs and manners: he was all law, and of that ſevere and mercileſs ſort, which knows not how to pardon the ſmalleſt imprudence or deviation from worldly wiſdom.

(d) Though moſt of the biographers of Metaſtaſio agree in this account of his placing himſelf under a celebrated advocate at Naples, in order to purſue the ſtudy of the law after the deceaſe of Gravina; the Poet himſelf, in his letters to Saverio Mattei, calls him the celebrated advocate, and afterwards counſel *Caſtagnola*.

Metaſtaſio was not ignorant of his ſeverity and invincible hatred for poetry; but inſtead of looking upon it as an evil, he was the more eager to place himſelf under his moſt rigid diſcipline, in order to prevent a relapſe into poetry, which had hitherto been to him ſo unprofitable a ſtudy. The reception of Metaſtaſio by this Lycurgus, and his firſt lecture, were perhaps rendered more auſtere and acrid by the fame of his poetical talents, with which not only Naples but all Italy was already filled; but Metaſtaſio hearing it with heroic patience, renewed his promiſe of unwearied application, and kept it ſo well during his firſt reſidence under the advocate's roof, that he began to entertain great hopes of his becoming an excellent lawyer, and treated him with as much ſweetneſs as his bitter nature would allow. He knew that the ſtudies of his young diſciple were frequently impeded by the viſits of perſons of learning and diſtinction, to whom his poetical abilities were well known, and who remembered him when he was brought to Naples, as an *improviſatore*, by Gravina. But now their expectations were transferred to his legal abilities, upon which,

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from his learning and application, they had formed the higheſt hopes. It is certain that Metaſtaſio at this time, exerciſing the greateſt tyranny over his natural inclination, refrained entirely, not only from writing verſes, but from ſpeaking them extempore, in ſpite of all ſolicitation. The firſt breach of contract with the rugged advocate, and firſt ſeduction of the muſe during his reſidence at Naples, was in the beginning of 1721, at the inſtigation of the counteſs of Althan, who prevailed on him to write an Epithalamium for the nuptials of her relation the marquis Pignatelli with a lady of the Pinelli family; it conſiſts of near one hundred octave ſtanzas, is full of elegance, and in the higheſt claſs of poetry. The drama of ENDYMION, the firſt that he produced expreſsly for muſic, is ſaid to have been written on the ſame occaſion, of which the following dedicatory epiſtle to the counteſs d'Althan, dated May 30, 1721, is printed at the head of his letters. "If it is natural, moſt illuſtrious and excellent Lady, for tender fathers to regard their children with affection, as a part of themſelves, and a continuation of their own exiſtence, with how much greater reaſon ought intellectual parents to love the productions of

their minds, and to cultivate that celeſtial ſpark which diſtinguiſhes us from brutes, and renders us ſuperior to all other terreſtial beings."

The reſt is common flattery—declaring that if he durſt, he would ſay the very fine things which he does ſay, of the lady's high rank and illuſtrious progenitors.

Metaſtaſio's next infringement of the laws laid down by the advocate *Paglietti* againſt the wicked practice of poetry, was occaſioned by an application from the Viceroy of Naples himſelf, that he would write a drama for muſic, to be performed on the birth-day of the empreſs Elizabeth, conſort of the emperor Charles VI. who was then in poſſeſſion of that kingdom. It is ſaid that he was with difficulty prevailed upon to enter on this taſk, and only complied upon a promiſe that it ſhould be kept a profound ſecret. Our bard in perpetual fear of the inexorable lawyer, was obliged to ſacrifice his hours of ſleep to this contraband commerce with the muſes. The piece was entitled THE GARDENS OF THE HESPERIDES, and is one of the moſt beautiful of his early productions. The viceroy on receiving it

preſented him with two hundred ducats, and is ſaid by the anonymous author of his life to have received his promiſe of ſecrecy, which he kept ſo religiouſly, that neither the compoſer, the ſingers, nor the printer himſelf had the leaſt ſuſpicion who was the author. That the young Bard may have wiſhed to lie concealed during the rehearſal and firſt performance of his dramatic attempt, is probable; but that he continued longer to make a myſtery of the parentage of this poetical child, when it had received ſuch unequivocal marks of public favour, is fully confuted by the firſt edition of this drama, which now lies before me, and to the dedication of which his name is ſubſcribed at full length *(e)*. It has been truly ſaid, that when a falſehood has gained admiſſion into a book, it is more likely to be copied

(e) As the firſt Edition is become very ſcarce, and ſettles ſeveral diſputed points in the Life of the Lyric Bard, I ſhall inſert the title here, entire.

GLI ORTI ESPERIDI *componimento dramatico da cantarſi, in occaſione del feliciſſimo giorno natalizio della ſac. Ceſ. Catt. Real Maeſtà di Eliſabetta Auguſta Imperatrice regnante, per commando dell 'illuſtmo, ed Eccelno, Sig. D. Marc' Antonio Borgheſi, Principe di Sulmone, Vicerè, &c. del Regno di Napoli.* In Napoli, 1721, 4to. per Franceſco Ricciardo.

than confuted. And this ſtory of Metaſtaſio wiſhing to lie concealed during the performance and ſucceſs of his firſt drama at Naples, after being hazarded by one biographer, has been taken upon truſt by all ſubſequent writers of his life; and I ſhould have been of the number had I not luckily met with the original printed copy. The dedication of this drama to the Vice-Queen, dated Naples, 28th of Auguſt 1721, is elegantly written, but abounds not with uncommon ideas.

"If, ſays he, the choice of a grand and ſublime ſubject were ſufficient to ſecure the ſucceſs of a literary production, I ſhould have no reaſon to dread the fate of this. But if it is true, that the more vaſt and majeſtic the edifice, the more ſolid ſhould be the foundation, and the workmanſhip the more exquiſite, I have the greater reaſon to fear that the enterprize preſcribed to me, is too high for my abilities. Deign therefore, moſt illuſtrious lady, to ſuffer me to avail myſelf of the ſplendor of your name, to make amends for the defects of my pen. Already the care of *the Gardens of the Heſperides*, whence my work has its name, is taken from the fabulous dragon and aſſigned to a deſcendant of the glorious family of Borgheſe.

ghefe *(f)*. And if every other reaſon ſhould fail to induce your acceptance of this humble offering, it is hoped that your excellency will be propitious to my prayer, in conſideration of the grandeur of the ſubject and the commands which emboldened the muſe to ſo daring a flight. I might now launch out in the praiſes of your excellence, and of your moſt worthy conſort, but beſides my injunctions to the contrary, I ſhould neither be able to ſay ſo much as is univerſally known, nor ſo little, but that your modeſty would be offended with it. Therefore, without lengthening this addreſs unneceſſarily, imploring for this production that patronage and partiality with which the author has been honoured by your excellency from his moſt early youth, I preſume with the moſt profound reſpect and reverence, to ſubſcribe myſelf your excellency's moſt humble, moſt devoted, and moſt obliged ſervant,

Naples, Aug. 28, 1721. PIETRO METASTASIO."

PORPORA had the honour of ſetting to muſic this firſt Lyric effuſion of our Bard. It only conſiſts of two acts. The principal

(f) " Let us, for once, (ſays the *Ab. Criſtiani*, the moſt exact and judicious of Metaſtaſio's biographers) forgive the Poet the uſe of ſo inſipid an argument."

female ſinger was the ROMANINA, of whom we ſhall have frequent occaſion to ſpeak hereafter. Thoſe of the other four ſingers employed, were in England during Handel's Opera Regency: *Pinacci*, *Paſi*, and *La Merighi*. The ſcenes and decorations, of which, three or four plates are given in this 4to edition, were extremely ſplendid, but not in the uſual good taſte of Italy in ſubſequent times.

The next drama that was written at the expence of his legal ſtudies, or his moments of reſt and recreation, was ANGELICA. This was printed at Naples, 1722, and ſet by Porpora, for the Empreſs's birth-day *(g)*. The preface to this piece is printed in the firſt volume of the author's letters, in which he ſays: "The learned and excellent men, in every faculty, that abound in Naples, at preſent, more than in any other city in Europe, are not accuſtomed to demean themſelves ſo far as to judge of works ſo much below their notice as this; yet as every production of art, which neceſſity or choice brings into the world, ſhould be ſubmitted to their deciſion,

(g) It has been ſaid in ſome accounts of Metaſtaſio's early productions, that *Farinelli's* firſt performance was in this Serenata, &c.

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as worthy arbiters of its merit, the author is anxious to excuſe, not to defend, the defects of the preſent drama. And indeed it would, perhaps, have been better able to defend itſelf, both as to the conduct of the fable and the elegance of the dialogue, had the author been allowed more time to correct and poliſh it, previous to its being ſet to muſic; but the producing poetry different from that in common uſe; the adopting each part to the particular talents and abilities of the performers; and many other reſtraints, which are difficult to explain to thoſe who are unaccuſtomed to ſuch labours, ought in juſtice to exempt the author from the cenſure of negligence. Thoſe, however, who generally ſet up for the moſt unerring judges of the works of others, ſeek for nothing but defects; and the inſtant a work appears, ſit in judgment over it, boldly pronouncing ſentence, and exerciſing the wretched employment of begging praiſe for themſelves, for denouncing the faults of others. As the author did not undertake the preſent work in order to acquire reputation, but in obedience to thoſe who honoured him with their commands; and as he luckily ſucceeded

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in pleaſing them, he readily renounces all other claims to favour.

"The plot is taken from Arioſto, as every one muſt know; but for the convenience of repreſentation, it has been altered in ſome parts."

The poems which he produced at Naples, were the admiration of all perſons poſſeſſed of a love and taſte for poetry, particularly *the Gardens of the Heſperides*; but none felt its beauties ſo forcibly as the BULGARELLA *detta* ROMANINA, the greateſt female ſinger and actreſs of her time; who having performed the part of Venus in that occaſional drama, was ſo enchanted with the uncommon beauty of the poetry, that ſhe could not reſt till ſhe had been introduced to the acquaintance of the author. Indeed, tradition ſays, that this drama had an effect upon the audience in general, which Naples had never before experienced. The recitative was hardly begun, when the ſpectators formed a more curious ſpectacle than the actors themſelves: ſo great was the change in their behaviour and mode of liſtening that was inſtantly produced. Violent noiſe and unbridled clamour, uſed to reign in every part

of

of that theatre, and could never be ſubdued but with great difficulty, even when ſome capital ſinger had a favourite air to perform; and it was no ſooner over, than the din was renewed with ſuch vehemence, that even the orcheſtra could not be heard. But now, every one delighted by the new and decorous arrangement of the ſcenes, original beauty and ſweetneſs of the verſe, the force of the ſentiments, the texture of the parts, and all the wonders of Metaſtaſio's dramatic poetry, was forced, almoſt inſenſibly, into profound ſilence and attention. The companions of Dido while Eneas was relating the tragical events which happened at the ſiege of Troy, could not have liſtened with more eagerneſs than the Neapolitan audience did at this repreſentation. Univerſal curioſity was excited, and enquiries made, after the author, who, though a poet and fond of praiſe, is ſaid to have wiſhed to lie concealed. But the *Bulgarini* who was not only pleaſed in common with the lovers of poetry, but impreſſed with the moſt lively gratitude to the author of the *Heſperides*, for the flattering reception and unbounded applauſe which this piece had procured her, both as an actreſs and ſinger, was impatient to be perſonally acquainted

quainted with him. And having diſcovered that ſhe knew one of his intimate friends, ſhe prevailed upon him to try to bring the poet to her houſe. He at firſt reſiſted the ſolicitation; but, at length, ceaſing to be inexorable, he was induced to make her a viſit. The *Romanina* (as ſhe was generally called from being a native of that city,) had no ſooner ſeen him, than ſhe felt an uncommon regard for him. His poetical abilities, elegance of manners, and fine countenance, together with the circumſtance of his being her countryman, or rather townſman, all joined to increaſe her regard; while Metaſtaſio on his part felt equally unable, with all the ſtoicism he could muſter, to reſiſt the deſire of improving the acquaintance; and frequently returned to enjoy the pleaſure of her converſation.

He had ſoon reaſon to believe, from the countenance and behaviour of *Paglietti*, that neither his theatrical production, nor the new ſtage acquaintance which he had made, was unknown to him. The praiſes he received from the *Romanina*, and all thoſe to whom the ſecret had been divulged, and their preſſing inſtances that he would continue to write, awakened his paſſion for poetry,

poetry, which he had flattered himſelf was wholly ſubdued. He now began to feel, that by the narrow and contracted ſtudy of the law, his genius could never expand in his own original ideas, but would be conſtantly tied down to thoſe of others. His reflections upon the ſordidneſs of ſacrificing his whole life to a diſtaſteful buſineſs, for the mere hope of acquiring wealth, (as he afterwards confeſſed to his confidential friends), joined to the harſh treatment of the old advocate, which became more intolerable in proportion as the aſſiduity of Metaſtaſio diminiſhed, entirely determined him to quit both him and his profeſſion.

His female friend perceived the conflict and internal war; and in order to ſtimulate his courage and reſolution, ſhe and her huſband invited him in the moſt preſſing manner to reſide under the ſame roof, and aſſured him that they would contribute every thing in their power, to render his life as eaſy and comfortable as poſſible. He remained ſeveral months in a ſtate of uncertainty; but at length, determined to accept their offer, to return to poetry, and to enjoy the pleaſures of ſociety in full liberty. Yet he did not ſeem inſenſible of the apparent indecorum

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and want of fortitude which he manifeſted in quitting, with ſuch ſeeming levity, the purſuit of ſtudies which had been recommended to him by his deceaſed patron; nor was he quite at his eaſe on the ſide of delicacy, as to appearances; the obligations to the *Bulgarini*, under which he was loading himſelf, frequently oppreſſed his mind. And yet ſo limited is our power of penetrating into future events, that the meaſures which he now purſued, far from impeding either his fame or fortune, were the foundations of all his ſubſequent celebrity. An Italian poet has well deſcribed the ſhortneſs of mental viſion.

Sebben ſembra talor che torvo e iniquo
Il volto verſo noi volga la ſorte;
Ella ſeguendo ſuo coſtume antiquo
A inaſpettata gioja apre le porte:
E aſconde ſpeſſo ſotto calle obbliquo
Della felicità le vie più corte:
Onde non ſappia in mezzo ai torti, e ai guai
L'uom che temer, nè che ſperar giammai.

"Blind to the future," while he ſojourns here
Man knows not what to hope or what to fear;
Amidſt misfortune, ſorrow, and diſmay,
Fate oft, in frowns, points out the ſhorteſt way
To fortune, fame, and unexpected joy,
By means which prudence trembles to employ.

Sig. Saverio Mattei relates a curious anecdote which he had from the princeſs Belmonte,

Belmonte, concerning the power of our young author's extemporaneous poetry, during his reſidence at Naples, after the deceaſe of Gravina. The poet having a law-ſuit on his hands, for part of the poſſeſſions bequeathed to him in that kingdom by the Civilian, applied to this princeſs for her intereſt with the judge, (an iniquitous practice in almoſt every country, but England,) and ſhe told him, if he would firſt make her miſtreſs of the ſubject, by pleading his own cauſe himſelf, *all'improviſta*, and convince her that juſtice was on his ſide, ſhe would uſe her utmoſt influence in his favour. He at firſt excuſed himſelf, on account of want of practice, in a faculty which he had diſcontinued for many years. But the princeſs perſiſting in her wiſh, as the only condition on which ſhe ſhould intereſt herſelf in the buſineſs, he at length begun: and pleaded his cauſe *in a ſong*, with ſuch lively and inſinuating expreſſions, that he ſoon drew tears from his patroneſs. And while he was in the act of *incantation*, other company came in, who were equally affected by his *enchantments*. The next day, princeſs Belmonte applied to the judges, begged, prayed, and related, not only the merits of

the cauſe, but the extraordinary talents of her client; intreating him to be preſent at a ſimilar exhibition. A day being fixed, and Metaſtaſio deſired to repeat his pleadings to a new audience in the princeſs's palace, he conſented; and without repeating a ſingle verſe of what he had ſung before, ſuch were the fire, elegance, and touching enthuſiaſm of his numbers, as left not a dry eye in the room. The cauſe was ſoon after juridically determined in his favour.

We will ſuppoſe from the innate probity and honour of Metaſtaſio, that he had juſtice as well as poetry on his ſide; but when eloquence, or a ſiren voice is employed to confound right and wrong, FACTS, which ſhould alone determine legal right, are ſo concealed, diſguiſed, and perverted, that juſtice, which ſhould be not only *blind* but *deaf* to all but facts, is totally baniſhed the court.

The *Bulgarini* was engaged to ſing in the theatre of Naples, during the carnival of 1724; and being very ambitious of appearing to as much advantage in the next opera as ſhe had done in that for the birth-day of the empreſs, ſhe preſſed the poet to write a drama, in which, as firſt woman, ſuch a

character might fall to her ſhare, as would give her an opportunity of diſplaying all her powers, both as an actreſs and ſinger. It is eaſy to imagine with what zeal the Abate went to work, in order to gratify her wiſh. After many heroines had paſſed in review, DIDO was at length choſen, and the drama entitled DIDONE ABBANDONATA produced; in which he choſe the period of the hero, Æneas, quitting the Carthaginian queen: as it furniſhed ſcenes of the greateſt force and paſſion, as well as more expreſſion for his pen, and more abundant opportunities for the diſplay of the Romanina's abilities, than any other. This was the firſt perfect muſical drama, perhaps, that ever graced the Italian ſtage. The applauſe it obtained, was equal to that of the *Orti Eſperidi*; and though the ſtory was ſo well known, that no effects could be produced by ſurpriſe, yet the pleaſure of the audience was exceſſive *(b)*. The different editions circulated in a ſhort time, were innumerable; and the Italians, proud of the reſurrection of their drama, began to challenge all the reſt of Europe, where their theatrical productions were thought ſuperior,

(b) This opera was ſet by *Sarro*, and the part of Æneas performed by *Nicolini*.

to ſhew any one, originally written for muſic, equally perfect. The learned Saverio Mattei, who is a very judicious muſical critic, in his eulogium on *Iomelli*, in which he has inſerted a ſhort account of the progreſs of theatrical poetry and muſic, ſays, that "the Romanina was a great actreſs, and that Metaſtaſio himſelf was obliged to her for ſuggeſting to him the fineſt ſituations in his Op. of *Didone*; ſuch as the 14th and 15th ſcenes of the ſecond act, which were entirely of her invention, as the princeſs Belmonte had frequently told him." Opera annals, perhaps, can furniſh no other inſtance of a female ſinger, qualified to inſtruct a poet, except the Mingotti; who had ſtudied ſtage effects as well as harmony, ſufficiently to enlighten the author of the words ſhe ſung, as well as the compoſer of the muſic.

From the great and ſudden celebrity of *Didone*, which immediately after its firſt appearance at Naples, was ſet by the beſt compoſers of the time for the other principal theatres of Italy; the Venetian miniſter at Rome, where it had been performed to Sarro's muſic, was inſtigated to apply to Metaſtaſio to write the opera of SIROE,

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which he ſent to Venice, where it met with a ſucceſs equal to that of Dido, to the great emolument of the author, who was magnificiently rewarded for the ſuperior excellence of his poetry. This drama was ſet by VINCI at Venice, and performed and printed in 1726.

It appears from the original *libretti*, or printed books of the words, all which I have been ſo lucky as to procure, that the Romanina not only performed the principal female part in Metaſtaſio's four firſt dramas at Naples, but that ſhe performed with the celebrated Nicolini in *Didone*, and *Siroe*, at Venice, when they were firſt repreſented there in 1725, and 1726; and according to Quadrio, *(i)* Metaſtaſio was himſelf in that city at this time; as, prefixed to the Venetian edition of *Didone* in 1725, there is a ſonnet ſigned by the poet, and addreſſed to the ladies of Venice. It was during this period, that he altered, for the ſame performers, the old opera of SIFACE, at the requeſt of Porpora.

The Romanina, probably, was not very young at this time, as in 1709, and 1712,

(i) Storia d'ogni poeſia.

ſhe had arrived at the ſummit of her profeſſion at Genoa, where, according to the printed books of the words, ſhe performed the firſt woman's part; and it does not appear, that ſhe ever ſung on the ſtage after ſhe quitted Venice, in 1726.

Didone, which had produced our poet, at Naples, another ſum of two hundred ducats, was thought a much leſs conſiderable advantage to him, than the conſtant encreaſe of the regard and affection of the Romanina: who is ſaid to have exulted extremely, as well as her huſband, in the ſagacity with which they had made choice of ſo dear and valuable a gueſt.

In the carnival of 1726, while Metaſtaſio's dramas received ſuch unbounded applauſe at Venice, *Didone*, as ſet by Vinci, was received at Rome with acclamation. The famous ex-jeſuit *Cordara*, who was there at that time, in his *eloge* of Metaſtaſio, recited at Alexandria in 1782, deſcribes its reception in the following manner:

" Every ſcene produced one continued applauſe. But who can deſcribe the rapture of the pit, when the queen of Carthage diſdainfully riſing from the throne, repreſſes the inſolent pretenſions of the king of Mauritania

ritania, with the dignity of an independent princeſs, by the ſpirited air, *Son Regina*, &c? The noiſe ſeemed to ſhake the theatre to its foundation. I was not there myſelf, as my habit did not allow me to be preſent at ſuch ſpectacles; but I almoſt heard the rumour in my cell, ſo full was all Rome with the fame of this production."

In 1727, the Romanina having fulfilled all her theatrical engagements at Naples and elſewhere, prepared to return to Rome, yet declared at the ſame time, that ſhe would never ſee her native city again, unleſs in the company of her dear friend. He remained for a while irreſolute; but, at length, the warm affection he retained for the place of his nativity, in ſpite of the neglect and diſappointment which had driven him thence, heightened perhaps by his regard for the Bulgarini, and fortified by the deſire of ſeeing his father, and the reſt of his family, determined him to quit Naples, in company with his benefactrice; but not before he had obtained a promiſe from her, that, in return for the hoſpitality which he had received under *her* roof at Naples, ſhe and her family ſhould become *his* gueſts, at Rome. To this propoſition all parties having acceded, he

wrote to his agents, to provide a houſe ſufficient for the two families of *Trapaſſi* and *Bulgarini*. And from the time of his arrival in that city, till his departure for Germany, they all lived under the ſame roof, and conſtituted one family. The Romanina, as more rich and accuſtomed to the management of a family, was inveſted with the ſuperintendance of all houſehold concerns; the reſt had nothing to do, but to attend their own purſuits; while Metaſtaſio received viſits, wrote verſes, improved his circumſtances, and encreaſed his celebrity.

The firſt drama which he produced, expreſsly for Rome, was CATONE IN UTICA, which was ſet by VINCI and performed in that city, 1728, and in 1729, at Venice, to the muſic of LEO. He choſe the ſubject purpoſely to pleaſe the Romans, ſuppoſing that he ſhould gain both applauſe and gratitude, by diſplaying the virtue of one of their own Heroes. But as it ſeldom happens that a prophet or a poet (which in ancient times were united in the ſame perſon) receives due honour in his own country, particularly at Rome, which is proverbially called the reſidence of ſtrangers; in ſpite of the excellence of this drama, which abounds with

ſublime, as well as tender ſentiments and delineations, of the paſſions of glory, ambition, anger, and love; and in which the conduct was natural, and cataſtrophe happy, it was inſtantly attacked by the ſatirical genius of the Romans, and the performance ſuſpended. The frivolous ſcenes, and feeble poetry to which they had been long accuſtomed, had corrupted the taſte of the Roman public in general; and except a few learned men, leſs invidious than the reſt, who if they knew of no modern Cato, had read, at leaſt, about the ancient, this piece was at firſt very coldly received; though afterwards, when their minds and taſtes were enlightened and refined by other original and beautiful works of our author, this drama was treated with more juſtice.

The next opera which our author produced, was EZIO, ſet by PORPORA, in 1728, and SEMIRAMIDE RICONOSCIUTA, ſet by the ſame compoſer, 1729; but though both theſe dramas were received in the moſt favorable manner, and the praiſes beſtowed upon the poet were unbounded, his fortune was not greatly improved by their ſucceſs. Poetry has more frequently enriched the bookſeller, than the author, in every country; but

but at Rome, it is a drug of leſs value, even to the bookſeller, than elſewhere; and Metaſtaſio's muſe, however chaſte, was but little better treated for not being meretricious. If Metaſtaſio had been a mere pſalmodiſt, or hymnologiſt, his monkiſh rhymes might have obtained him ſome eccleſiaſtical preferment; but the poetry which he produced on pagan and ſecular ſubjects, precluded him from every avenue to the church. He was, however, far from neceſſitous, and with the aſſiſtance of the Romanina, whoſe purſe was always at his ſervice, his fortune and ſituation were tolerably eaſy. But the being ſometimes obliged to avail himſelf of the liberality of his generous friend, was a circumſtance which humbled and mortified him beyond any other. He could not bear to reflect on being a burthen to her for whom chiefly he wiſhed to be rich, not only to exempt her from the expences which ſhe incurred on his account, but to manifeſt his gratitude for the benefits ſhe had already conferred on him.

His amiable friend tried every means in her power, to ſet his mind at eaſe, concerning his obligations to her: aſſuring him that he had contributed much more to her profeſſion-

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al fame than it had been in her power to do to his fortune; that ſhe was in ſuch circumſtances as rendered the ſmall friendly offices which ſhe had been able to perform, more a pleaſure than an inconvenience; and preſſed him, in the moſt urgent manner, to tranquilize his mind on that account, and to believe (which ſhe aſſured him was the truth) that he was doing her the greateſt favour, when he afforded her an opportunity of dividing with him her poſſeſſions.

The afflicted poet drew ſome comfort from theſe declarations, but it was of ſhort duration. He was perpetually convinced of the ingratitude of his pretended Roman friends, and the duplicity of his protectors; and having nouriſhed in his ſoul an ardent paſſion for general eſteem, reſpect, and admiration, his narrow circumſtances threw him into ſo profound a fit of melancholy, that he became incapable of receiving conſolation.

Such was his ſtate of deſpondency, when, to his great aſtoniſhment, he received the following Letter from prince Pio of Savoy, Inſpector of the Imperial Theatre at Vienna.

LETTER

LETTER I.

YOUR dramas and other poetical compoſitions, which have acquired you ſuch univerſal applauſe, have been ſo far approved by his Imperial Majeſty, that he is deſirous to engage you in his ſervice, on ſuch conditions, as ſhall ſeem moſt worthy of your acceptance. It will be therefore neceſſary for you to mention, in your anſwer, ſome ſpecific annual appointment, which will be fixed and invariable. Sig. Apoſtolo Zeno deſires no other colleague than yourſelf, not knowing at preſent, any one ſo fit to ſerve ſuch an enlightened monarch. Upon your anſwer and requiſition, will depend the remitting a ſum of money neceſſary to defray the expences of your journey. I am happy in this opportunity of manifeſting, with how much eſteem and zeal, I am your ſincere and affectionate ſervant,

Luigi Principe Pio di Savoja.

Vienna, Aug. 31, 1729.

Metaſtaſio was infinitely more ſurpriſed and flattered, by this unſolicited and ſplendid offer, from finding himſelf recommended to the Emperor's notice, by the celebrated and learned

learned *Apoſtolo Zeno*, who was himſelf at this time laureate to the emperor Charles VI. a prince, who had long ſupported his Lyric Theatre with the greateſt magnificence. Zeno had enjoyed his office in this court, from the year 1718, where his chief employment conſiſted in furniſhing dramas for muſic, which had long been juſtly thought, the beſt of which the Italian language could boaſt.

And yet the offer of this employment to Metaſtaſio, however dazzling, was not long productive of joy without deduction. The quitting Rome, for which he had always a filial fondneſs, as well as leaving his family, friends, and, perhaps, more than all, the Romanina, impreſſed his mind with a ſorrowful allay to his happineſs. But he was too well read in his friend Horace not to know that,

Nihil eſt ab omni
Parte beatum.

Upon conſulting with his family, they inſtantly conceived ſuch magnificent hopes of his future aggrandizement, as contributed much to their conſolation at loſing him; and the Romanina was ſo generous and diſintereſted, in ſpite of ſecret affliction, as to uſe her

her utmoſt eloquence in removing his doubts, and diminiſhing the cauſes of his repugnance, at quitting Rome and his friends.

After many conſultations, and diſcuſſions, of the ſeveral arguments amical and inimical to the acceptance of the unexpected propoſition from Vienna, the following is the anſwer which he ſent, and which contains ſo many characteriſtic traits of modeſty, propriety, and delicacy, that it deſerves to be preſerved, as a model of conduct under ſimilar circumſtances.

LETTER II.

TO PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY.

THE haſte with which I am obliged to anſwer the letter, that Your Excellence has deigned to write to me, will not allow time ſufficient for my recovery from the ſurpriſe which the unexpected honour of his Imperial Majeſty's commands muſt neceſſarily have produced; an honour to which I had never dared aſpire, even in my vaineſt moments. The doubt of my ſlender abilities, would make me accept with extreme timidity the glory of ſerving his majeſty, if his own moſt animating and auguſt approbation, had not deprived me of the

the liberty of ſelf-diffidence. I ſhall therefore only wait for Your Excellency's orders, which will be executed as ſoon as received. Your Excellence has repeatedly preſcribed to me in your letter, to mention my wiſh, as to an annual appointment. This law weakens my repugnance, and will be an excuſe for my preſumption. It is ſaid, that the uſual allowance to the poets who have been in the ſervice of the court of Vienna, and that which Sig. Apoſt. Zeno receives at preſent, is four thouſand florins per annum: ſo that, regulating my expectations by former uſage, I ſhall confine them within the ſame limits; humbly requeſting it may be remembered, that in quitting my country, I am obliged to leave a ſufficiency, for the maintenance of an aged and helpleſs father, and for others of my numerous relations, who have no ſupport, but the fruits ariſing, in Italy, from my feeble talents; I muſt live in the moſt ſplendid court of Europe, in ſuch a manner, as will not diſgrace the monarch whom I ſhall have the honour to ſerve; and laſtly, weighing the poſſibility, that my abilities may fall ſhort of expectation, and be inferior to the taſk with which I ſhall be honoured, I ſhall live in perpetual terrors of impending poverty

ty and paternal wants. I have thus ventured to comply with Your Excellency's injunctions; but beg that my frankneſs may be regarded as an act of obedience; and whatever my circumſtances may be, I ſhall, with the utmoſt alacrity, execute thoſe orders which it ſhall pleaſe my auguſt patron to enjoin me. I am fully ſenſible how much is due to the incomparable ſignor Ap. Zeno; who, not content with having hitherto protected my writings, thus generouſly honours me with his beneficent recommendation, for which I ſhall retain the moſt lively gratitude, to the end of my exiſtence.

I have the honour to be, &c.

Rome, Sept. 19, 1729.

The prince replied to this letter, October 28th, of the ſame year.

LETTER III.

PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY, TO METASTASIO.

It was not poſſible to anſwer your ſatisfactory letter ſooner, as I was abſent from Vienna, on a hunting party, with the Emperor; but upon communicating your ſentiments to His Majeſty, I have the pleaſure to aſſure

assure you, that he was well pleased with the propriety, prudence, and good sense, manifested in your letter, concerning your future establishment. It is true signor Apost. Zeno had a pension of four thousand florins per annum; but this high salary was granted to him in consequence of his being Imperial *Historiographer*, as well as poet. But I have no doubt that in process of time, you will arrive at the same appointment. I assure you that the Abate Pariati had but two thousand florins *per annum*. However, in consequence of your superior merit, his Majesty has granted you three thousand florins annually, and one hundred *ungheri* to defray the expences of your journey; for which an order is sent to the Imperial banker at Rome. I trust, therefore, that you will not disappoint the hopes I have conceived of seeing you soon at Vienna, and of assuring you in person, how much my heart inclines me to serve you with zeal and affection.

LUIGI PRINCE OF SAVOY.

Metastasio, his family, and friends, thought it right, implicitly to submit to the terms proposed in this letter, of which the only part that occasioned them any uneasiness,

was the ſolicitude expreſſed by Prince Pio, for his ſpeedy arrival in Vienna; which could not take place without leaving his affairs in great confuſion, and failing in his engagement to furniſh the Roman theatre with two new dramas for the enſuing carnival. He ſaw no better means of ſolving thoſe difficulties, than by ſpeaking the truth, and explaining to his illuſtrious correſpondent the real ſtate of his circumſtances.

LETTER IV.

METASTASIO TO PRINCE PIO OF SAVOY.

THE three thouſand florins, agreeable to the oracular decree of my auguſt patron, need no reiterated acceptance, as I have already had the honour to aſſure your Excellence, that whatever ſhould be the conditions which I was to hope for from my ſtudies, I ſhould not be ſo much my own enemy as not eagerly to embrace them. For however difficult it is to acquire ſelf-knowledge, I am not ſo devoid of it as to be ignorant, that what is now granted me, ſprings from the pure effect of Imperial munificence; accuſtomed to make its eſtimates by its own dignity

dignity more than by the merit of others. I therefore already regard myſelf as the ſervant of His Majeſty.

No time being fixed for my departure, I likewiſe conſider that omiſſion as another proof of Cæſarian clemency and fore-ſight, in benignly conſidering, that in conſequence of ſuch a removal from my uſual abode, all my plans, engagements, and ſchemes of life, muſt be changed, and it cannot therefore take place with a rapidity equal to my zeal. Indeed my journey would neceſſarily meet with ſome delay in arranging my family concerns, if I had no other to tranſact; as I have two ſiſters already grown up, for whom an aſſylum muſt be found; and I have likewiſe to diſpoſe of ſome ſmall places which have been beſtowed on me, one of which requires perſonal attendance. I have alſo ſome engagements to fulfill with the managers of the Roman theatre, to whom I had promiſed two new dramas before I was encouraged to hope for the honour of ſuch auguſt commands. However, I flatter myſelf, that all my arrangements will be completed before Lent; but if my attendance ſhould be required ſooner, there is no ſacri-

fice which I would not make, to manifeſt with how much zeal and duty I have the honour to be, &c.

Nov. 3, 1729.

This letter had all the effect he wiſhed, and obtained him permiſſion to remain at Rome, till he had finiſhed the two dramas which he had engaged to write. But neither the muſe, nor the arrangement of his affairs, baniſhed from his thoughts the obligations which he thought himſelf under to Apoſtolo Zeno, to whom he addreſſed the following letter, two days after he had written to Prince Pio.

LETTER V.

METASTASIO TO SIG. APOSTOLO ZENO.

I DID not think it poſſible that your name ſhould be intitled to a greater degree of reſpect and veneration, than that with which I have been impreſſed for it, in common with all Italy, from the time of my earlieſt ſtudies; but at preſent, my peculiar obligations to you are of ſuch a nature, as would render

render ſilence unpardonable. Indeed it is impoſſible for me to conceal, without ingratitude, the owing to your generoſity my whole ſucceſs in the world. The admiration which you have excited in me, and my eagerneſs for imitating your works, together with the weight of your approbation, have elevated me to the honour of ſerving his Imperial Majeſty: hence I have the preſumption to hope, that, regarding me as the work of your own hands, you will continue to protect me, as a kind of defence of your own judgment of my feeble abilities, as well as to honour me with your advice, how to avoid the rocks which I may have to encounter, in entering into the ſervice of the greateſt monarch in the world. My obligations to you, as well as the hopes of your wife and benevolent counſel, I have declared aloud to my whole country, and ſhall continue to declare them as long as I live; being the only indications which I am able to give, of my unprofitable gratitude.

No particular time having been fixed for my departure, I have ventured to ſuppoſe, that it may be deferred till after Lent; and I have fully explained to his Excellence,

Prince Pio, my motives for ſuch delay. I muſt likewiſe beg your concurrence and ſupport in this procraſtination, to prevent any unfavourable impreſſions; and your beſt endeavours, that all things may be ſettled entirely to the ſatisfaction of my auguſt Patron.

Rome, 5th Nov. 1729.

It may, perhaps, be neceſſary here to give ſome account of our poet's worthy predeceſſor, the Imperial Laureate, to whom the foregoing letter was addreſſed, and of whom but little is known in England.

The learned poet, critic, and antiquary, APOSTOLO ZENO, born 1669, and deſcended from an illuſtrious Venetian family, which had been long ſettled in the iſland of Candia, early applied himſelf to literature, and the ſtudy of Italian hiſtory and antiquities. In 1696, he inſtituted at Venice, the academy *Degli Animoſi*, and was the editor of the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*, of which he publiſhed thirty volumes, between the year 1710 and 1719. His firſt muſical drama, *L' Inganni Felici*, was ſet by *Carlo Fran. Polarolo*, and performed at Venice, 1695. And between that time and his quitting Vienna, whither he was invited by the Emperor Charles

Charles VI. in 1718, he produced forty-ſix Operas, and ſeventeen Oratorios, beſides eighteen dramas, which he wrote jointly with Pariati *(k)*. His dramatic works were collected and publiſhed at Venice, 1744, in ten volumes octavo, by Count *Gozzi*. And in 1752, his letters were printed in three volumes, by *Forcellini*, in which much ſound learning and criticiſm, are manifeſted on various ſubjects. But one of the moſt uſeful of his critical labours ſeems to have been, his commentary on the *Bibl. dell' Eloquenza Italiana di Fontanini*, which was publiſhed in 1753; with a preface by his friend Forcellini, chiefly dictated, however, by Zeno himſelf, juſt before his death, 1750, in the 82d year of his age.

After he was engaged as Imperial Laureate, he ſet out from Venice for Vienna, in July 1718; but having been overturned in a chaiſe, the fourth day of his journey, he had the misfortune to break his leg, and was confined at an inn in the little town of Ponticaba, near Treviſa, till September. He arrived at Vienna, the 14th of that

(*k*) See Hiſt. of Muſ. vol. iv. p. 111. 231. 298. 533.

month, *ſalvo*, he ſays, if not *ſano e guerito (l)*, after twelve days of exceſſive ſuffering on the road.

Moſt of the dramas, ſacred and ſecular, which he wrote for the Imperial court, were ſet by *Caldara*, a grave compoſer and ſound harmoniſt, to whoſe ſtyle Zeno ſeems to have been partial. But this excellent antiquary and critic, ſeems never to have been ſatisfied with his own poetical abilities. So early as the year 1722, in writing to his brother from Vienna, he ſays: "I find more and more every day, that I grow old, not only in body, but in mind: and that the buſineſs of writing verſes, is no longer a fit employment for me *(m)*." And, afterwards, modeſtly ſenſible of the ſterility of his poſſeſſions in Parnaſſus, which though they furniſhed *uſeful* productions, were not of a ſoil ſufficiently rich to generate ſuch gay, delicate, and beautiful flowers, as are requiſite to embelliſh the Lyric ſcene, he expreſſed a wiſh that he might be allowed a partner in his labours; and was ſo juſt and liberal as to mention the young Metaſtaſio, as a poet

(*l*) Safe, if not ſound and cured.

(*m*) *Lettera* 133. *tomo* ii. p. 263.

worthy

worthy to be honoured with the notice of his Imperial Patron *(n)*.

If the muſical dramas of Apoſtolo Zeno are compared with thoſe of his predeceſſors and cotemporaries, they will be found infinitely ſuperior to them in conduct, regularity, character, ſentiment, and force. But Metaſtaſio's refined ſentiments, ſelection of words, and varied and meliſluous meaſures, ſoon obſcured the theatric glory of Zeno; who, after the arrival of his young colleague, ſeems to have attempted nothing but oratorios. In 1731, he returned to

(n) Saverio Mattei aſcribes to the *Princeſs di Belmonte, D. Anna Franceſca Pinelli de Sangro*, Metaſtaſio's invitation to Vienna. This princeſs, who had been the patroneſs of the young poet at the time he was ſent into Calabria, by Gravina, to purſue his ſtudies, preſerved his life, by attentions to his health, which was then ſo delicate, that he was thought in a conſumption; and aſcribing the diſorder to his too frequently and violently fatiguing his cheſt, in the exerciſe of his talent as an *Improviſatore*, obliged him to diſcontinue the practice. One of his firſt dramas, was written for the marriage of this princeſs at Naples. And her ſiſter, the counteſs *d'Althan*, in high favour at the court of the Emperor Charles VI. at Vienna, at the inſtigation of the princeſs di Belmonte, recommended him to that prince, as a ſucceſſor to Apoſtolo Zeno, and honoured him with her friendſhip to the end of her life.

Venice,

Venice, where he ended his days, after producing many learned and valuable works, on ſubjects of hiſtory, antiquities, and criticiſm.

Metaſtaſio completed his two dramas of *Artaſerſe & Aleſſandro nell'Indie*, for the carnival of 1730, which were both ſet by Leonardo Vinci, and performed at Rome before the poet's departure, with univerſal applauſe. The firſt of theſe dramas is dedicated by *Cavanna*, the manager of the opera, to the perſonage then ſtiled at Rome, GIACOMO III. *Re della gran Brettagna*, and the ſecond, to CLEMENTINA, his titular queen. The principal ſingers in both, were *Careſtini*, and *Fontana, detto Farfallino*, or the *little Butterfly*.

Upon quitting Rome, Metaſtaſio conſigned into the hands of his zealous and affectionate friend, the *Romanina*, all his effects, intereſts, and concerns; together with the management of his family affairs. She moſt willingly ſubmitting to theſe ſeveral taſks, as well as to the care of the produce of the little places, and ſums of money, which he left behind him.

At length, he departed with a heavy heart, and a moſt ſovereign contempt for the friend-

ſhip and flattering promiſes of the great, by whoſe deluſions he had ſo long entertained hopes of preferment in his native city; whence, at laſt, he was driven into a kind of ſplendid baniſhment, for the reſt of his life. Theſe early diſappointments, from being extremely credulous, rendered him incurably ſceptical, as to all future preſages of good fortune; and the effects of hoping too much in early life, and too little after, produced, perhaps, the principal defects in his character.

END OF THE FIRST SECTION.

SECTION

SECTION II.

METASTASIO arrived at Vienna, in July 1730. Of his reception there by Prince Pio, and at court, by his Imperial Patron, we have a curious account, in a letter written by himſelf, to a friend at Rome, the day after he had been preſented.

LETTER I.

METASTASIO TO A FRIEND.

I RETURNED on Tueſday, by my Imperial maſter's commands to Laxemburg; I ſaw him at table, I dined with Prince Pio, and afterwards, at half an hour paſt three in the afternoon, I was admitted to an audience in form. The maſter of the ceremonies, by whom I was introduced, left me at the door of the ſtate room, in which his Majeſty was leaning againſt a table, with his hat on, and ſeemed to be very thoughtful and ſerious. I muſt confeſs to you, that though I was prepared for this ceremony, I loſt my courage, when I began to reflect, that I was

in

in the preſence of the greateſt perſonage upon earth, to whom it was my buſineſs to ſpeak firſt: a circumſtance which did not augment my fortitude. I made the three obeiſances which had been previouſly preſcribed to me: one in entering the room, one in the middle, and the laſt near his Majeſty. After this, I knelt on one knee; but my gracious maſter immediately ordered me to ſtand up, ſaying, *riſe*, *riſe*. Here I uttered with a voice, I believe, not very firm, the following ſentiments: "I know not whether my joy or confuſion is the greateſt, in throwing myſelf at the feet of your Imperial Majeſty. It is an honour for which I have ſighed from my earlieſt youth; and at preſent, I not only find myſelf in ſight of the greateſt monarch in the world, but inveſted with the honourable title of one of his actual ſervants. I am ſenſible of the duties of my office, and know my own inſufficiency to fulfill them to my wiſh; but if, with the loſs of my eyes I could become a Homer, I ſhould not heſitate to ſubmit to immediate blindneſs. I ſhall indefatigably try every means in my power to ſupply natural defects, by labour and ſtudy. I know, that however I may want abilities, your Majeſty's

clemency

clemency will operate in favour of one who ſo ardently wiſhes himſelf more worthy of ſuch patronage; but I am not without hopes, that there is a latent virtue in the title of Poet to your Imperial Majeſty, that will have an influence upon my exertions."

In proportion as I advanced in my ſpeech, I perceived the countenance of my great patron brighten up; and when I had done, he ſaid: "I was already well convinced of your worth; but now I am ſtill better informed of your good diſpoſition, and I doubt not but you will acquit yourſelf in the office, to which you are appointed, in ſuch a manner as muſt enſure my being pleaſed with you." Here he ſtopt to hear whether I had any other petition to make; at which time, according to the inſtructions I had received, I entreated permiſſion to kiſs his hand; he held it out to me, ſmiling, and condeſcendingly preſſed mine. Encouraged by this demonſtration of kindneſs, I then ſeized his Majeſty's hand with both mine, and ſqueezing it, with tranſport, gave it ſo hearty a kiſs, that my moſt benign maſter muſt eaſily diſcover that it came from the heart.

Vienna, July 25, 1730.

His

Metaſtaſio's firſt letter to his friend the Romanina, that has been preſerved, was written ſome months after the above; the opening of the correſpondence ſeems to have been loſt or ſuppreſſed. This begins in a formal manner, but is full of pleaſantry, on the humours of the Carnival at Rome.

LETTER II.

TO SIGNORA MARIANNA BENTI BULGARINI, DETTA LA ROMANINA.

MADAM,

I RECEIVED this morning, not only the letters of the preſent week, but of the laſt, which have relieved my mind from the apprehenſions and fears with which I was aſſailed, that ſome pious ſoul had been beforehand with me at the poſt-office, in order to ſave me the trouble of reading them. I am much obliged to you for the ample accounts you have given me of the operas and plays, and rejoice that our *Ciullo* (clown) has done himſelf honour. I hope that the poſt in which his Holineſs has engaged him, will not be unprofitable. Tell me what you think of it, and give him my beſt wiſhes.

This

This is preciſely the firſt day of maſks with you, while I am freezing here. But I entertain myſelf in imagining how you are employed and diverted. Ah! this moment, which, according to the Romans, will be the 21ſt hour, the hurlyburly will begin in the *Corſo*. See! the Canon *Magiſtris* opens his ſtreet-door. There goes the Abate *Spinola*, and here *Staneſio* and *Cavanna*. See! too, the muſicians of the *Aliberti* theatre. Who is that maſk that looks ſo hard at our window. See! he is throwing about his ſugar plumbs, and cannot ſtand ſtill. It is certainly the little Abate *Bizzaccari*. And he, with the long cane, who can he be, examining all the coaches, but the dainty *Piſcitelli?* Ay, ay, 'tis certainly he. Look yonder! there's Count *Mazziotti* ſpeaking Latin. There go the Courtiers too, affectedly dreſſed in coloured paper and cards. But who, in the name of wonder, is that ſtrange woman? Almoſt all the coaches turn towards San Carlo. What have we here? A ſignal. Quick, quick! here comes *Bargello* and the Genoa reſident. No matter; only will there be room for us all? Can you ſee? Extremely well. But you ſeem crouded. I beg your pardon; I am perfectly

at

at my eaſe. Look at 'em! Look at 'em! What is their number? Seven. Who goes firſt? *Gabrielli* on his ſorrel horſe; but *Colonna* has got before him. For God's ſake! what have we here? A ſtrange creature on a Barbary horſe. He'll be kill'd, certainly, poor D—l! are they driving him away? No, no, it was a dog, I was miſtaken.

Well, you may ſay what you will, but a ſtrong imagination is a fine thing. And thus I have ſeen the Corſo at Rome, from the Jeſuits' Square in Vienna: and now, to have done with the ridiculous and burleſque, I am plagued, as uſual, by my cough, without the leaſt hope of being free from it, till we have fine weather. I have finiſhed my Oratorio, which you will ſoon ſee at Rome, printed in ſome way or other *(o)*. I have ſpoken to the Venetian Ambaſſador about a certain Toilette, and he was much aſtoniſhed that it had not been received, as he had had advice of its being delivered. We ſhall ſee what effect this new requiſition will have. From the ſnow and cold at Rome you may

(o) This was SANT' ELENA AL CALVARIO, the firſt ſacred drama which he produced after his arrival at Vienna. It was ſet by Caldara, and performed in the Imperial Chapel in Paſſion week, 1731.

judge what we ſuffer here. Not a week paſſes that we do not hear of ſome poor countryman or other being frozen to death. In the city, we walk upon ice nine inches thick, bliſtered harder than ſtone. And the ſnow which is continually falling, is ſhivered and powdered ſo fine by the wind, that it flies like the duſt in Auguſt; and yet there are ſtupid people going about in Traineaux all night. For my own ſecurity in walking, I have the ſoles of my ſhoes covered with felt, having already had a fall in the indiſpenſable paſſage from my door to the coach; but in this clumſy ſalutation of my parent earth, the machine received no great miſchief. In ſhort, having been appriſed of the lubricity of the ſtreets, I was prepared for it. You aſk my opinion of a Sonnet by *Ignatius di Bonis*, which I have never ſeen, and of which I am ignorant of the ſubject, conſequently, &c. Make my reverences to the Genoa reſident, with thanks for his remembrance by the ſecretary of his republic. Addio, happineſs attend you.

N. M.

Vienna, Jan. 27, 1731.

LETTER III.

TO THE ROMANINA.

MADAM,

You continue to doubt of my repoſe, and you would not doubt without reaſon, if your agreeable letters had not calmed my mind ſo much, that, at preſent, little of my agitation remains; but my obligations to you are increaſed, in proportion to the intereſt which I perceive you take in my happineſs. My health, though not bad, is far from good; nor can it be otherwiſe; for though we are now in the middle of May, it is colder than it was two months ago. But mind! and be well yourſelf. Monſignor Paſſionei, the Apoſtolic Nunzio to this Court, arrived on Tueſday evening, the 9th inſtant. He was met two miles from the city gates, by his eminence Cardinal Grimani. He is much reſpected here. Prince Eugene immediately viſited him, and yeſterday his Imperial Majeſty gave him audience at Laxembourg. The Abate Pierfanti, Auditor of the Nunciate, a polite man, and of excellent morals, whom I have met with much pleaſure, came

with him; we were fellow ſtudents and cronies, and attached to literature, at the ſame time.

I received, four days ago, by a courier from Rome, called Dioniſio, the executorial letters againſt Cardinal Coſcia, which you ſent. I am much obliged to you for them, and beg of you to continue to avail yourſelf of all ſuch favourable opportunities, without the fear of my having duplicates of what you ſend; as couriers ſeldom come hither from Rome. You will find, perhaps, by my letter, which is now on the road, that we think exactly alike, concerning the fate of the unfortunate Romoni and Sardini, which is a true applauſe to juſtice, though I ſhudder for the tragedy. You will find our thoughts ever the ſame, according to our old cuſtom.

I am extremely glad, that the poor Abate Falconi is acquitted of the falſe accuſations laid to his charge; and ſincerely hope that the conſequences of his innocence, will be as favourable to his intereſts as you have predicted. Embrace and ſalute for me Bulga, Leopold, and all friends, and do me the juſtice to believe me, at all times, and on all occaſions, your faithful N.

Vienna, May 12, 1731.

LET-

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM,

You do me more honour than I deſerve, in thinking my letters artfully obſcure. However, your ſuſpicions have ſet me upon conſidering what could poſſibly give riſe to them, or be conſtrued into myſtery, in what I have ſaid of the feſtival for which I am commanded to prepare a drama. I have frequently told you, that this time is appropriated to the celebration of the birth-day of my Imperial Miſtreſs; and even if I had never mentioned it, there was no poſſibility of preparing for it in ſecret, as you know this is the firſt feſtival in the year, or if you did not know it, all Rome could inform you of the regularity of this Court, ſo that concealment would be uſeleſs and impoſſible *(p)*. I did

(p) It ſeems as if the Romanina, wiſhing to go to Vienna as a ſinger at this feſtival, had ſuſpected Metaſtaſio of not ſpeaking openly on the ſubject; and perhaps he was fearful of the effect which her arrival might have had upon his own reputation: as the Emperor Charles VI. was a religious prince, who greatly diſcouraged every appearance of indecorum.

not therefore imagine, that the ſubject of the piece, without the whole of the compoſition, could afford you any amuſement. The title is *Æneas in the Elyſian Fields*, or *The Temple of Eternity*. It was ſet by Fouchs. The principal action is, the accompliſhment of the tender and pious wiſh of the hero to ſee his father. The ſpeeches of thoſe perſonages, whom Æneas met with in the Elyſian Fields on this occaſion, are applicable to the praiſes of Auguſta, Cæſar, and Germany. The interlocutors are *Æneas*, *Deiphobe*, or the *Cumean Sybil*, *Eternity*, *Virtue*, *Glory*, *Time*, and the *Shade of Anchiſes*. In the choruſes are *Linus and Orpheus*, with their followers. Such is the ſummary of my plan; of the execution, you will be informed by others hereafter. Is it poſſible, that you ſhould injure me ſo far, as to think it neceſſary to draw out a formal account of your money tranſactions? I believe you have ſpent more of your own, than of mine; and it aſtoniſhes me, that you are not in want of a ſupply; but it is a ſure ſign that your head is at home; and you want to convince me, I ſuppoſe, that your judgment is now good enough to make amends for former defects. I ſhall ſay no more on this, except, that

when

when there is any fault to find, I ſhall be at your ſervice, and you know I am not ceremonious. I want to know whether the room in the *Corſo* is furniſhed, and with what materials, and of what colour. I am ſorry for the failure of *Cleomene*, and hope that *Artaſerſe* will be more profitable to our dear Cavanna; but for the accompliſhment of this hope, I muſt rely on the partiality of my great country. N. M. addio *(q)*.

Vienna, June 23, 1731.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

N. M.

THE ſeal of a cover of a letter, which I ſent you ſome time ago, is that of the Chancellor of the ſtate, the ſanction of which was not uſed by chance. I am unable to define what you thought of it; but know very well, that I have no reaſon to repent

(q) N. M. are initials of ſome cabaliſtical words in the Poet's correſpondence with his female friend: perhaps *Noſtra Madona*; but he ſometimes calls himſelf, *il voſtro* N.

the having uſed it. I was in the utmoſt anxiety for the fate of *Artaſerſe*, not having found a ſyllable about it, in your letter by the laſt poſt. But to-day I hear of its ſucceſs, not only from yourſelf, but Bulga, Leopold, and Peroni. And am extremely happy, well knowing the pleaſure it will afford you all, on my account. You can anſwer for the patriotic gratitude which I muſt feel to a city like Rome, when it thus deigns to intereſt itſelf in my labours. May my productions, ſome time or other, juſtify, in the opinion of the world, its partiality!

I am aſſured from all quarters of the zeal and accuracy of the performers. I beg you will thank them in my name, particularly the incomparable *Scalzi*, and *Farfallino*, whom I ſalute and embrace *(r)*. Poor Vinci! Now that merit will be known, which during his life, was blaſted by his enemies *(s)*.

(*r*) This muſt have been the *revival* of the opera of Artaſerſe at Rome, where it was firſt performed in 1730, as the date of the printed copy of the words, now before me, teſtifies; unleſs it was printed previous to its performance.

(*s*) This original and admirable compoſer, the competitor of Porpora and Haſſe, ſeems to have died during the long run of *Artaſerſe*.

What a miſerable being is man! He thinks fame the only good that can render him happy; but alas! He muſt die ere he is allowed to enjoy it; and if he does not die, envy will make him wretched for attempting to acquire it *. But let us have done with moralizing. I am doubly happy now, in my own health, and in that which you enjoy. Study to preſerve it, as you value mine.

I now diſcover the worth of my dear Marianne; who in her letters, and her prudent conduct, not only pleaſes me at preſent, but gives a different face to paſt times. You have ſurpaſſed all my expectations. It is the fear of tripling the expence of poſtage, that prevents my writing to Leopold *(t)*, and my dear Bulgarini *(u)*. Thank the latter heartily, in my name, and take that care of him which he merits. Tell Leopold that I ſhall always love him, if he acts in

* For ſuch the frailty is of human kind,
Men toil for fame, which no man lives to find;
Long rip'ning under ground this *China* lies:
Fame leaves no fruit, till the vain planter dies!

Earl of Mulgrave.

(t) Metaſtaſio's brother. *(u)* The huſband of the Romanina.

ſuch

ſuch a manner as to merit your eſteem. To the moſt polite auditor, Merenda, preſent a thouſand compliments. I am not diſpleaſed that he confides ſome of his ſecrets to you, but I ſhould have wiſhed him leſs communicative to others. And now repeating the ſame ardent wiſhes which you have made for me, I remain your N. Adieu.

Vienna, July 7, 1731.

The firſt regular opera which Metaſtaſio produced for the theatre of his Imperial patron, was ADRIANO IN SIRIA, ſet by Caldara.

Of its ſucceſs, we have no account in his letters; but by the general favour of this drama in the reſt of Europe, immediately after its performance at Vienna, there can be no doubt of the applauſe it received on its firſt appearance, Nov. 4, 1731. It was brought on the ſtage at Naples 1732, and performed at Venice 1733, to the muſic of Jacomelli. Metaſtaſio's friend, ſignor Riva, the miniſter from the duke of Modena to the Imperial court, pointed out ſome ſmall inaccuracies in this drama; but the author either corrected, or explained them off, in anſwering his letter, Sept. 20, 1732.

Of

Of the reception of DEMETRIO, his ſecond opera for Vienna, we have an ample account written by the author himſelf, in the following letter to his friend, the Romanina.

LETTER VI.

N. M. I DID not think I ſhould have ſuch good tidings to ſend you to-day as I am now able to do; indeed I was entirely prepared for the contrary. Laſt Sunday, my opera of *Demetrio* was performed, for the firſt time, with ſuch applauſe, that the oldeſt people in the country aſſure me, they never remember approbation ſo univerſal. The audience wept at the parting ſcene; to which my moſt auguſt patron was not inſenſible. And notwithſtanding the great reſpect for the Sovereign, in many of the recitatives, the applauſe of the theatre was not reſtrained by his preſence. Thoſe who were before my enemies, are now become my apoſtles. I am unable to expreſs to you my ſurpriſe at this ſucceſs, as it is a gentle and delicate opera, without thoſe bold ſtrokes which produce great effects; nor did I believe it adapted

adapted to the national taſte. But I was miſtaken. Every thing demonſtrated, that it was well underſtood by the audience, and they repeat parts of it in converſation, as if it were written in German. My maſter began to ſhew his ſatisfaction, from the end of the firſt act, and afterwards ſpoke it openly to all around him. The muſic is of the moſt modern kind that Caldara has compoſed; but all the diſcontented world is not to be ſatisfied. The ſcenes were beautiful. Minelli has both acted and ſung better than uſual, and pleaſes almoſt univerſally in the part of *Alceſte*. Dominichino, acquitted himſelf in the part of *Cleonice*, with general approbation. Caſati has exalted the part of *Olinto*, as Borghi has that of *Fenicio*. The Olzauſerin ſung, as ſhe ſtill looks, *beautifully*. Brown, the baſe, did not do half ſo well in the public performance, as at the rehearſals, in which, however, he did but little. And here is my whole hiſtory, which I would not have written to any one but you, as others would pronounce me to be a vain coxcomb.

Vienna, Nov. 10, 1731.

This opera was brought out at Rome, the beginning of the next year, under the direction

rection of his female friend, to whom he ſent inſtructions for the performance; in which, though ſhe was not allowed to ſing on the ſtage, ſhe aſſumed the poet's part at the rehearſal.

In a letter to the Romanina on the ſubject, he ſays: "You are now in the middle of your theatrical diverſions, while I am at the dry work of writing an Oratorio. Amuſe yourſelf for me, and be aſſured that your pleaſure contributes greatly to mine. It was my full intention to ſend a ſheet of directions for the performance of Demetrio; but, in examining the opera, I find ſo little intricacy in it, that it would be affronting both you and myſelf, if I attempted to inſtruct you."

—He however gives in this letter two pages of directions for the repreſentation of the opera of *Demetrio*, which would be very uſeful to the compoſer, performers, and director, in bringing that drama on the ſtage.

When he has finiſhed his inſtructions, he ſays: "Theſe were the arrangements, and I have ſeen the inhabitants of theſe northern regions weep. Do you produce the ſame effects.

"His Eminence the archbiſhop of Colonitz, in order to aſcertain my exiſtence, will ſee me

me himſelf, and I ſhall not be able to ſend to him till next week. There is nothing new or unexpected in the illneſs of the Empreſs's mother, ſo that *Iſſipile* will be performed. There is a precious part in it of a pirate, which runs through the whole opera; it will be admirably performed by our dear Berenſtadt, who together with our friend Rondinella, *(plump friend)* I embrace moſt cordially. Say the ſame to Bulga, to Leopold, and to yourſelf. By recommending to you the care of your health, I mean to recommend to you, your V. N. Adieu."

Vienna, Jan. 12, 1731.

LETTER VII.

TO THE ROMANINA.

MADAM,

N. M. You reproach me, I know not with what conſcience, for the very ſame brevity which you yourſelf practice in your letters. We are either both to blame, or neither. But enough of this; for I dare not pretend that a month will paſs in which I ſhall be exempt from reproof; I look on it as a neceſſary evil, like the return of a fever

to thoſe who have a quartan ague. I am extremely concerned for the ill fate of Didone, as much on account of ſignor Cavanna, as on my own. Theſe are the abominidable viciſſitudes incident to theatres, a trifle can ſave, and a trifle can ruin them *(x)*. I hope Demetrio will be more fortunate. But to confeſs the truth, it runs a great riſk of a ſimilar fate, as it depends more on good performance, than decorations or ſtage effect: and the prejudice of Rome againſt our ſingers, is not a favourable circumſtance. However, the ſame ſudden turns which render theatrical ſucceſs inſecure, are equal reaſons for our not giving way to deſpair.

Vienna, Jan. 19, 1732.

His opera of *Iſſipile*, was firſt performed in January 1732; and during its run, he

(x) This opera, after its ſucceſsful firſt repreſentation at Naples, in 1724, was performed at Venice, 1725, to the muſic of Tommaſo Albinoni. In 1726, at Crema, to the ſame muſic, and at Rome to the original muſic of Sarro. It was likewiſe performed to this muſic at Turin, 1727, and at Venice, 1730. It is not recorded who was the unfortunate compoſer of the muſic, which was ſo ill received at Rome, in 1732, at the time of which Metaſtaſio ſpeaks in this letter.

ſent

ſent a copy of it to his friend, the Romanina for the Roman theatre, with an account of the ſcenes, and inſtructions for the ſcenery *(y)*. He ſays, this opera was rehearſed in a great hurry. And adds, "I have begun the Oratorio; I correct the preſs; aſſiſt in bringing out a play at court; curſe the cold; and ſigh every quarter of an hour; I am however very well."

In a ſubſequent letter, we have a further account of the ſucceſs of *Iſſipile*, and of the theatrical tranſactions at the Imperial court during this time.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE ROMANINA.

N. M.

On Tueſday evening, my opera of Issipile was performed at court, for the laſt time, to ſuch a croud, as had not been ſeen there on

(*y*) It is probable, that Iſſipile was performed at Rome this year, to the original muſic, to which it had been ſet for Vienna, by Franceſco Conti; but it was new ſet the ſame year, for Venice, by Giovanni Porta.

any

any former occaſion. My moſt clement patrons were unwilling to diſpleaſe a troop of gentlemen, who are acting, very imperfectly, the *diſconſolate Ciciſbeo* of Fagioli; a comedy performed at Naples, and which we ſaw rehearſed at the houſe of the Abate Belvedere. By having one performance leſs of this piece, there might have been another of *Iſſipile*, as all the court, city, and they themſelves, wiſhed; but ſlaves to their grandeur, they thought that this would have been conſtrued into a clear diſapprobation of the *dilettanti* comedians; and therefore have obliged themſelves to hear it performed three times, like the opera, and another comedy in proſe, acted by muſicians. Retaining the diſtinction, of four repreſentations, to that piece alone, which was performed by the Archducheſſes. When the laſt repreſentation of *Iſſipile* was over, the Emperor, in deſcending from his box, came up to me, and, in the preſence of the whole court, had the benevolence to expreſs the pleaſure he had received from my labours, and to tell me that *The Opera was very fine; that it had ſucceeded wonderfully, and that he was perfectly ſatisfied with me.* A diſtinction the

more honourable, as it is difficult to obtain any notice from our patron, who is ſo reſerved in public, that when he deigns to beſtow it, we are ſure that it is not by accident, but deſign. I tell *you* all this, becauſe in ſpite of your affected indifference for my perſon, I hope, nay believe, that you intereſt yourſelf extremely in all that concerns me.

There is an Abbey vacant in Sicily, called *St. Lucia*, by the death of a certain Abate Barbara: but my misfortune is, that I know not in what dioceſe it is ſituated, or whether it is requiſite that the candidate ſhould be a regular eccleſiaſtic.

Vienna, Feb. 23, 1732.

Part of this letter is loſt; but it appears from other letters, that though he wiſhed for ſecular preferment in the church, he had no intention to be an eccleſiaſtic *in ſacris*.

LET-

LETTER IX.

TO THE ROMANINA.

I AM arrived at the middle of the third act of my opera *(z)*, ſo that next Sunday I hope to be able to tell you that it is finiſhed. But when ſhall I come to the end of the next, which is likewiſe in meditation? It muſt, however, be ready by the end of Auguſt. Do you but wiſh me health and patience, and every thing will go well. With all my intenſe application, and the unfavourable ſeaſon, I am almoſt exhauſted. I ſay almoſt, becauſe my head, from time to time, is unequal to its labour; probably from the pores being too much cloſed by the long continuance of the damp, and the chillneſs of the air in this place; ſo that in proportion as I ſuffered from the heat in Italy, I am

(z) He means the firſt opera for the next Carnival. Metaſtaſio, beſides occaſional operas, cantatas, &c. uſually furniſhed one drama for the Carnival, one for the Emperor's birth-day, and a third, or ſome other poem for muſic, for the Empreſs's birth-day. In the Carnival of 1731, after three performances of *Adriano*, Jan. 4, 6, and 8th, his ſecond opera of *Demetrio* was brought on the ſtage, the 10th of the ſame month.

tormented by the cold in Germany. So much does the variation of climate change our nature. But I have not felt it in this particular only; my abilities to combat its effects, continually, are not natural. I know that the ſluggiſhneſs of the air is communicated to the ſpirits, and diminiſhes their promptitude at exertion.

I incloſe you a moral ſonnet, which I compoſed in the midſt of a pathetic ſcene that I was writing, and with which I was much affected; ſo that the laughing at myſelf, on finding my eyes ſtreaming with tears for a diſtreſs of my own making, produced in my mind the thoughts which you will read in my ſonnet, and which, if it appears tolerable, let others read alſo.

SONETTO.

Sogni, e favole io fingo, eppure in carte,
Mentre favole, e ſogni orno, e diſegno,
In lor (folle che ſon!) prendo tal parte,
Che del mal, che inventai, piango, e mi ſdegno.
Ma forſe allor che non m'inganna l'arte
Più ſaggio ſono, e l'agitato ingegno
Fors' è allor più tranquillo? O forſe parte
Da più ſalda cagion l'amor, lo ſdegno?
Ah che non ſol quelle, ch'io canto, o ſcrivo
Favole ſon; ma quanto temo, o ſpero
Tutt'è menſogna, e delirando io vivo:

Sogno

Sogno della mia vita è il corſo intero.
Deh tu, Signor, quando a deſtarmi arrivo,
Fa, ch'io trovi repoſo in ſen del vero (a).

SONNET.

The dreams and fables which I often feign,
Fool that I am! a real grief impart;
And evils, I myſelf have forg'd, give pain
Which gen'rates tears and penetrates my heart.

Perhaps the illuſion is not all a dream,
Perhaps while agitated thus, we find
Ourſelves more wiſe, and truth and reaſon beam
Unuſual radiance on the ardent mind.

Oh! that not only what I ſing and write
Were fabulous, but ev'ry hope and fear
Which occupies my mind from morn to night,
Like phantoms of the brain, would diſappear!

This life is nothing but a dream throughout,
Oh grant, great God! whene'er it is reſign'd,
That I may wake exempt from fear and doubt,
And in the arms of Truth, repoſe may find.

(a) The eleventh verſe, the author ſays, may run thus,

Seguendo l'ombre, in cui ravvolto io vivo.

It was in writing the ninth ſcene of the ſecond act of the *Olimpiade*, that Metaſtaſio found himſelf in tears, an effect which afterwards proved very contagious.

After I had written this ſonnet, there came into my head, as uſual, a ſcruple; which is, that the 11th verſe and the 10th explain a propoſition which may perhaps be thought too general, when I ſay *Ma quanto temo, o ſpero tutto è menzogna:* "But whatever I fear or hope is falſe." I would not have any dry and ſevere critic ſay to me, "What! don't you fear hell? don't you hope in God?" For, according to this, the hope in God and fear of hell are falſe. It is true, that in anſwer I might ſay, moſt ſagacious Sir! I have known from my infancy, as well as you, that God and hell are indiſputable truths; and if this was not my belief, I ſhould not have recommended myſelf to God, at the cloſe, in the manner I have done. The hopes and fears of which I ſpeak in the ſonnet, are thoſe that proceed from mere terreſtial objects. You ſee that the defence is ſufficiently ſolid, and the counterpoiſon is found in the ſonnet itſelf. Read it, and give me your opinion ſincerely, without concealing from me that of Monſignor Nicolini, which will have great weight with me. I ſalute the whole houſe, and to yourſelf I heartily recommend your V. N. V. N. N. M. addio.

Vienna, June 6, 1732.

LET-

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

I BEGIN my letter with a dreadful piece of news, juſt arrived from Prague by the poſt, which has extremely afflicted me, as well as all Vienna. The following is the copy of a letter which I have juſt received.

Prague, 11th June.

" THE Emperor being upon a ſhooting-
" party, in the wood of Branchais, and
" having fired at a ſtag, the ball, after paſſ-
" ing through the animal, wounded his
" Highneſs, the Prince of Schwaiſemberg,
" Maſter of the horſe, in the left ſide, in
" ſo fatal a manner as was immediately
" pronounced to be mortal; and this morn-
" ing, between three and four o'clock, he
" died. This dreadful calamity has thrown
" the Emperor into the deepeſt affliction.
" It was with the utmoſt difficulty that he
" was prevented from going to ſee the dying
" Prince, in order to aſk his pardon; but
" he was at laſt prevailed on to ſend Count
" St. Julian to perform this melancholy
" office."

This news has thrown the whole city into the greateſt conſternation, many for the love they bore the Prince, and all for the ſuffering of our moſt auguſt Maſter, whoſe humanity and tenderneſs are known to be ſuch, as muſt have diſordered his whole frame, as well as wounded his mind; yet it was impoſſible to prevail on him to be blooded, which was thought by the faculty to be abſolutely neceſſary to his ſafety. And the worſt of all is, that the Empreſs, whoſe circumſpect and prudent advice would have had moſt weight, in prevailing on his Majeſty to ſubmit to his phyſicians, was unfortunately not in Prague, having begun the uſe of the waters at *Carleſhad*. In conſequence of this accident, the feſtival of Auguſt will not be celebrated in the city of *Cromau*, as I wrote you word; for being a place that belonged to the deceaſed Prince, it would be very ill calculated for joy and feſtivity. I ſhall wait for new orders; but the general opinion is, that the Emperor will ſoon return to Vienna.

I have nothing to ſay at preſent to Sig. Ant. Tommaſo Lazzaretti. The information which you have procured, concerning the vacancy in Sicily, arrives too late; we

muſt now look forward to other things. Your attention, however, convinces me of your kind concern and zeal for my ſervice; which I ſhall always try to preſerve, and of which I am both pleaſed and proud.

You cannot imagine how much I am afflicted with the diſgrace of the theatre *delle Dame*. The worſt part of the ſtory is, that in whatever way the poor Cavanna may try to recover the public favour, his loſs muſt be very great. My brother has written me the news of the town. His information is now a little ſtale, but I am, nevertheleſs, obliged to him. I embrace, thank, and beg of him the continuance of his intelligence.

How can I ſufficiently thank you for the affectionate anxiety you expreſs about my health; it is already mended by your letter; think then what it would be by yourſelf. Many compliments to Bulga, and other friends; and accept yourſelf of a thouſand proteſtations of the immutability of your N. Adieu, N. M.

Vienna, June 14, 1732.

LET-

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

Was there ever ſuch a diſlocation of the things of this world, both ſmall and great? Can a more unhappy accident be imagined, than that which I related in my laſt letter? And of another kind, can greater deſolation be repreſented to the mind, than that which you have ſo well deſcribed in your letter which I received this morning? It is terrible, that a great city ſhould be obliged to ſuffer for the caprice of an individual, and that, for ſuch frivolous motives, he ſhould have no repugnance to injuring numbers, and diſpleaſing all.

I pity thoſe who feel the loſs; and even without this motive, it is impoſſible to be indifferent.

The Emperor, after the unhappy accident, returned to Prague, where, according to all accounts, he ſhut himſelf up in his room, without ſeeing a human creature, during a whole day and night. Prince Eugene was the firſt, who, with reſpectful violence, forced himſelf into his preſence, and interrupted

rupted the ſolitude and profound affliction in which he was immerſed. It is univerſally believed, to have been wholly from the care and importunity of the Prince, that he allowed himſelf, at length, to be blooded, and conveyed to *Carleſhad*, where he ſtill remains, and will try the effect of the waters.

The youngeſt Archducheſs, Marianne, has been ſix days ill with the ſmall-pox; news that will increaſe the agitation of our royal Maſter, at being ſo far from her. There are, however, no dangerous ſymptons, and the phyſicians prognoſticate a a happy recovery. In the mean time, the eldeſt Archducheſs, Tereſa, is ſeparated from her ſiſter, to eſcape infection. The Empreſs dowager, Amelia, widow of Joſeph, has quitted the convent, where ſhe lived retired, in order to reſide with the Archducheſs Tereſa, in the Imperial palace, *Favorita*, till the ſiſters can ſafely be again united.

I am well in health, but ill in ſpirits. All theſe events make me miſerable; and the public melancholy inſenſibly communicates itſelf, even to the indifferent. At preſent, the return of their Imperial Majeſties is not known. The accident which happened, and the illneſs of the Archducheſs, it is believed,

lieved, will haſten them; but all is conjecture. In the mean time, I have nothing to cheer me, but your good health; preſerve it carefully, and believe me your N.

Addio, N. M.

Vienna, June 21, 1732.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

I PLAINLY perceive, that I am an animal of a diſtinct genus from the common race of men. Nobody has the *Influenza* more than once; but I am honoured with it twice. Though I ſuffered, and recovered, like other people, laſt week; yet, this week, comes the ſecond volume, with a cough, head-ach, and other complaints: however, I am again perfectly well. I hear that you are attacked by this diſorder in the ſame manner; I am ſorry it has reached you; I hope it will not be very obſtinate; indeed if its quality is not more malignant at Rome, than in Germany, you have no occaſion to be greatly alarmed.

I am

I am glad that my *Aſilo d'Amore* * cuts a figure in Italy, even with a compoſition of Cardinal Polignac, though with ſome diſadvantage. I perfectly agree with the public, in their approbation of the latter; and it appears to me, that in this production of the Cardinal, the human heart is laid open with great ſagacity, and the morality interſperſed, does not ſavour of pedantry; a common defect with all thoſe who wiſh to inſtruct, but diſdain to pleaſe. It is very true, that this ſpecies of poetry is much leſs difficult than the other, I mean than that in which any one is highly praiſed. Praiſe offends the ſelf-love of thoſe who hear it, and our malignant nature makes us imagine, that what is given to others, is taken from ourſelves. So that panegyrics ſeldom pleaſe, though good; whereas ſatire is welcome, however coarſe and unjuſt. This may account for the difficulty of gilding the pill of praiſe, in ſuch a manner, as to make us forget ourſelves. But I ſhall not mount the pulpit, or aſſume the part of a Seneca; and yet I know

* This was a little Feſtal Drama of one act, written for the Empreſs's birth-day, and performed to the muſic of Caldara, in the Imperial Palace at Lintz, in Upper Auſtria, Auguſt 1732.

not

not how it is, but whenever I write to you, I feel a diſpoſition to philoſophiſe, and what is more extraordinary, without the fear of tiring you. Vienna, Dec. 6, 1732.

The following Letter, to the ſame correſpondent, ſeems of the firſt claſs in the collection.

LETTER XIII.

WILL you ſuggeſt to me a ſubject for an opera, or no? I am plunged into an abyſs of doubt. Nay, don't laugh, and tell me I am mad. The ſubject of an opera is of the greateſt conſequence. Luckily, it is my good fortune to be abſolutely obliged to decide immediately; otherwiſe, I ſhould remain undetermined till the day of judgment, and even then, *Da Capo*. Read the 3d ſcene, act iii. of my *Adriano*. Obſerve the character which the Emperor gives of himſelf, and you will there ſee that of your friend. He knew his infirmity, and ſo do I mine, but without correcting it *.

Ah! tu non ſai
Qual guerra di penſieri

* Though the Poet does not in his letter quote *himſelf*; yet in order to ſave the reader the trouble of turning to the reflexion to which he alludes, we inſert it, with a tranſlation.

Agita

Agita l'alma mia. Roma, il Senato,
Emirena, Sabina,
La mia gloria, il mio amor, tutto ho preſente:
Tutto accordar vorrei: trovo per tutto
Qualche ſcoglio a temer. Scelgo, mi pento;
Poi d'eſſermi pentito
Mi ritorno a pentir. Mi ſtanco intanto
Nel lungo dubitar, tal che dal male
Il ben più non diſtinguo. Alfin mi veggio
Stretto dal tempo, e mi riſolvo al peggio.

Ah! thou knoweſt not
What warring ſentiments diſtract my ſoul.
Rome, the Senate, Emirena, Sabina,
My fame, my love, all are preſent; and I
Would fain accord them all. Yet find, where'er
I turn my eyes, ſome rock to fear. I chuſe,
Repent, and then, afterwards, repenting of repentance,
Return again to the firſt thought, and thus
Give birth to new contrition; till at length,
Quite wearied and perplex'd with endleſs doubt,
I can no longer diſtinguiſh 'twixt right
And wrong. And laſtly, having no more leiſure
For ſelf-debate, I chooſe the worſt.

This obſtinate vice of indeciſion torments me, without affording the ſmalleſt pleaſure in return; I feel it without the leaſt power of reſiſtance; it is the tyranny of body over mind; and I am convinced, that theſe exceſſes of doubt and irreſolution, the great enemies of action, are occaſioned by the mechaniſm of our ſoul's habitation, which makes

tis ſee things through a falſe medium: as the rays of the ſun are diverged, diſcoloured, and rendered yellow, green, or red, according to the body or medium through which they ſhine. Hence it is, that man ſeems not to act by reaſon, but mechanical impulſe; adapting reaſon to his feelings, and not his feelings to reaſon. If this were not the caſe, all thoſe who think well, would act well; but we ſee the contrary. Who ever examined nature and virtue better than Ariſtotle? And who has ever been more ungrateful to both? Who has ever taught us better than Seneca, to deſpiſe death, and who ever feared it more than himſelf? Who has ever uttered finer maxims of œconomy than our *Paul Doria*, and who ever ſquandered his patrimony more miſerably? In ſhort, the doctrine is true, and radically ſound; but we do not examine it in all its ramifications, becauſe that would carry us too far.

You are not tired when I play the philoſopher with you. Indeed I do it with no one elſe; and I have not forgotten the various converſations of this kind, which we enjoyed when we happily paſſed many hours of each day together. But how materials for

ſuch

ſuch diſcuſſions are increaſed ſince, by experience! We may ſpeak further on theſe matters ſometime or other, if the freaks of fortune do not entangle the thread of my honourable and fatiguing web.———*The reſt of this letter has been ſuppreſſed.*

Vienna, July 4, 1733.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

MAY years unnumbered be added to the life of my moſt auguſt Patron! who yeſterday publiſhed in my favour, a truly Cæſarean decree, in the ſupreme council of Spain, by which I am inveſted with the office of *Treaſurer* to the province of Coſenza in the kingdom of Naples: a poſt for life, of honour, authority, and if I were to perform the buſineſs myſelf in perſon, of conſiderable profit; but even after paying a deputy, the clear ſalary will amount to 1500 florins a year. You ſee that the appointment is not inconſiderable in point of pecuniary advantage; but be aſſured, that the honour done me by the ſolicitude, affection, and con-

deſcenſion, with which the Emperor has deigned to confer this benefit upon me, infinitely ſurpaſſes all lucrative conſiderations. It was publicly declared, at the Imperial table, to one of the members of the council, as a reward for my paſt and preſent labours; and his Imperial Majeſty was pleaſed to add, that he had, unſolicited, mentioned this appointment in council, as my juſt due. This public partiality of His Majeſty in my favour, has made ſuch an impreſſion, that yeſterday, contrary to cuſtom, when the decree was mentioned, there was no one of the counſellors who ventured to utter a ſyllable againſt it; but part of them ſaid coldly, that the order ſhould be executed, while the reſt applauded the juſtice and propriety of the appointment. The beſt part of the ſtory is, that this favour has been granted without the leaſt recommendation of any kind; ſo that I owe it entirely to the beneficent heart of Cæſar, to whom may God grant a long, fortunate, and glorious life! I ſhall probably be put to ſome difficulty in paying the fees of office, which I believe will be conſiderable; but I ſhall be ſoon reimburſed.

Yeſterday,

Yeſterday, after dinner, to moderate my joy for this my good fortune, I met with an accident which might have been ſerious, but was of no great conſequence. In mounting the ſtair-caſe of the theatre, at the palace called the *Favourita*, in order to reconnoitre the ſtage, one of the ſteps gave way under me, and I went head foremoſt to the next ſtairs, as if ſhot out of a cannon. However, except two ſlight contuſions, I eſcaped very well. This I may regard as a ſecond piece of good fortune, equal to the firſt. I am now going to demand an audience, in order to thank my Imperial Patron.

By the next poſt, you ſhall be informed of all that he ſays to me. Addio N. M.

Vienna, July 28, 1733.

This was the laſt letter to the Romanina, that has been preſerved. That zealous friend of his head, as well as heart, dying about the middle of February 1734, manifeſted the ſincerity of her attachment to the poet, by bequeathing to him all her poſſeſſions, after the deceaſe of her huſband, to the amount of twenty-five thouſand crowns. But Metaſtaſio, always conſiſtent, with his uſual rectitude and propriety, to-

totally declined accepting of her intended kindneſs, and transferred the whole bequeſt to her huſband, whoſe real property, according to our Engliſh ideas of juriſprudence, it ſeems legally to have been. The teſtamentary laws of Italy, may be different from thoſe of our country. Some Italian writers ſay, that the Romanina left Metaſtaſio *erede di tutto il ſuo* PATRIMONIO. "Heir to all her patrimony." If by patrimony was meant an eſtate poſſeſſed by inheritance, and independantly ſettled upon her at the time of her marriage, her teſtamentary diſpoſitions are reconcileable to Engliſh ideas of law in ſuch caſes; though prefering the friend to the huſband, deviates ſomewhat from the general cuſtom of our country. That the bequeſt was legal, has never been doubted by Metaſtaſio's biographers, who all ſpeak of his renunciation in the higheſt terms of panegyric, as uncommonly diſintereſted, generous, and heroic. And the poet himſelf, as well as all Italy, regarded it as a noble ſacrifice.

Whether Metaſtaſio's connection with the Romanina, was purely platonic, or of a leſs ſeraphic kind, I ſhall not pretend to determine. But the huſband reſiding in the ſame

houſe

houſe with them, both at Naples and Rome, and the friendly manner in which the Poet always mentioned him in his letters to the wife, with the open manner in which he expreſſed his affliction in writing to him after her death, would, in England, be thought indications favourable to conjugal fidelity. But a chaſte actreſs and opera ſinger, is a ſtill more uncommon phenomenon in Italy, than in Great Britain.

Yet though it is not thought abſolutely neceſſary for the female ſingers of Italy to be veſtals, while ſingle, or Lucretia's when married, they find it convenient to have a nominal huſband, who will fight their battles, contend with the firſt man, and *Impreſario* of an opera; and, occaſionally, ſtand in the gap, as circumſtances may require.

But whether the Poet's friendſhip for Bulgarini, the huſband, was pure and undiſſembled or not, his affliction for the death of his wife, ſeems to have been unfeignedly deep and ſincere. The following pathetic letter, written immediately after he had received the news of her deceaſe, and of her teſtament in his favour, ſeems a faithful delineation of the ſtate of his mind at this time, and to correſpond with that goodneſs

of heart, as well as thoſe tender feelings and lofty ideas of rectitude, which appear in all his other writings, and which have enobled the general tenor of his life.

LETTER XV.

TO SIGNOR DOMENICO BULGARINI.

OPPRESSED by the afflicting news of the death of our poor Marianna, I know not how to begin this letter. The tidings are intolerable to me on ſo many accounts, that I can deviſe no means to diminiſh the accuteneſs of my ſufferings; and therefore, I truſt you will not accuſe me of want of feeling, if I am unable to ſuggeſt to you any conſolation for your loſs, as I have hitherto been utterly unequal to finding any for myſelf.

The laſt diſpoſition of the poor deceaſed in my favour, aggravates the cauſe of my ſorrow, and obliges me to give a public and inconteſtable proof of the diſintereſtedneſs of that friendſhip, which I profeſſed to her while living, and which I ſhall preſerve for her honoured memory, to the laſt moment of my exiſtence. Knowing therefore, how much affection, kindneſs, and zeal, for the welfare

of the poor Marianna, you have always manifeſted, I ſhall beſt ſhew my gratitude to her, by entirely renouncing, in your favour, all claim to her effects; not through pride, God preſerve me from ſuch ingratitude! but becauſe it appears to be my duty, as an honeſt man and a Chriſtian. The advantage which I ſhall ſtill derive from this inheritance, even after renouncing it, will not be inconſiderable: as the knowing what was intended for me by the generous teſtatrix, will be a laſting proof of her friendſhip; and the relinquiſhing it in your favour, will be a proof of my diſintereſtedneſs with reſpect to her, and of my equity towards yourſelf. I am at preſent, thank God, in no need of ſuch aſſiſtance, as I am rewarded beyond my merit; ſo that I ſhall not ſuffer by the ſacrifice I make to you. Though I entangle you with no conditions in the renunciation which I incloſe, yet I have ſome requeſts to make, and counſels to ſuggeſt to you.

My firſt requeſt is, that the relinquiſhing this claim, may in no wiſe diſſolve our friendſhip; but that, according to the wiſh of the poor Marianna, our correſpondence may continue as entire as if ſhe were ſtill living; ſubſtituting you at

all times, and in all places, for her repreſentative.

My ſecond requeſt is, that you will undertake the trouble of receiving the ſalaries of my three offices in Rome, and the tranſacting of my Neapolitan concerns, exactly in the ſame manner as was done by our incomparable Marianne; for which purpoſe, I ſend you proper powers. I write likewiſe to Signor Tenerelli, at Naples, who will treat you in the ſame manner, as Signora Marianne herſelf; remitting to you, from time to time, whatever ſums may be due to me from that quarter, continuing to my poor family, the uſual aſſignments and proviſion, if you ſhall chuſe it, jointly with my brother.

The advice which ſeems neceſſary for me to give you, is, that you would aſſiſt the poor family of Signor Franceſco Lombardi, by every means in your power; and try by acts of charity to do every thing for them, which, in a ſimilar ſituation, you would expect from them to you. I have ſpecified in my renunciation, ſome particulars in which you ſhould aſſiſt them; but beſides my unwillingneſs to involve you in trouble and difficulty, I am ſo certain of the goodneſs of your heart,

that

that I have left all the merit of your benevolence towards them, to the liberality of your own determination.

In all things elſe, you are at full liberty to act as occaſion, and your own prudence, ſhall ſuggeſt.

At preſent, my mind is in too great perturbation for me to attempt giving you a plan for the regulation of your conduct. I ſhall only ſay, that it appears to me, as if you ſhould diſpoſe of all the effects you can ſpare, in order to raiſe a capital, and that you ſhould live in a ſmaller houſe.

I can think of no other teſtimony to offer you, at preſent, of my friendſhip and confidence. Be equally open in your correſpondence, and conſider my intereſts as your own, and me as your brother. I am unable now to write a longer letter; when my mind is more tranquil, I ſhall communicate to you ſuch thoughts as may occur.

In the mean time, love me, and endeavour to be comforted yourſelf. Be aſſured, if it were in my power, that I would try to contribute that to your conſolation, which I am unable to receive myſelf.

Vienna, March 13, 1734.

The

The following letter to his brother, in apology for his renunciation of the Romanina's intended kindneſs, will ſerve as an illuſtration of the principle upon which it was made, as well as of his own rectitude of character.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLD TRAPASSI.

In my preſent agitation for the unexpected death of the poor generous Marianne, my utmoſt efforts will enable me to write but little. I can only tell you, that both my honour and conſcience have obliged me to relinquiſh, in favour of her huſband, Domenico, that bequeſt which ſhe intended for me. I owe to the world an indiſputable proof, that my friendſhip for her, was neither built upon avarice, nor ſelf-intereſt. I ought not to abuſe the partiality of my poor deceaſed friend, at the expence of her huſband; and God, I truſt, will permit me to proſper, by ſome other means for my integrity. For myſelf, I am in want of no more than my preſent income; for my family, I have ſufficient at Rome for their comfortable

comfortable ſupport. Indeed if it ſhall pleaſe God to continue to me my preſent Neapolitan reſources, I ſhall be able to give further proofs of my affection for my relations, and for yourſelf in particular. Communicate theſe reſolutions to our father, to whom I am unable to write at preſent. Aſſure him of my fixt determination to aſſiſt him always, as I have hitherto done; or rather, to increaſe that aſſiſtance, if things are proſperous at Naples. In ſhort, I beg you will uſe your utmoſt endeavours to make him enter into my reaſons, that I may not be afflicted with his diſapprobation of my honeſt and chriſtian procedure.

In the mean time, I beg you will unite intereſts with Sig. Domenico, from whom I hope you will experience that friendſhip, which may be expected in return for the confidence and conſideration with which I have treated him. I have tranſmitted to him proper powers for tranſacting my money concerns, ſo that all things will go on as uſual. But the poor Marianne will never return! and I believe that the reſt of my life will be inſipid and ſorrowful. Condemn not, I entreat you, my reſolution, and believe me ever yours. Vienna, March 13, 1734.

He

He expreſſed his ſenſibility for the loſs of the Romanina, in the ſame affectionate manner, to another correſpondent.

LETTER XVII.

TO A FRIEND AT ROME.

Was it neceſſary for ſuch a calamity to happen, in order to procure me the long wiſhed for pleaſure of hearing from you? At leaſt, ſince the price is ſo great, I beg it may be continued, to mitigate, by the renovation of our intercourſe, the remembrance of my misfortune; a remembrance which ſeems to have placed me in the world as in a populous deſert, and in that kind of deſolation in which a man, if he were tranſported in his ſleep to China or Tartary, would find himſelf in waking, among people of whoſe language, inclinations, and manners, he was quite ignorant. In the midſt of theſe imaginations, reaſon enough is left to tell me who, and what I am; but that is not ſufficient to free me from affliction. May God, in whoſe hands are all events, turn this affliction to my benefit,

and

and teach me by ſuch a manifeſtation, what a vain hope it is, to form ſyſtems of happineſs, without his aſſiſtance *. You adviſe me to go to Rome in order to ſettle, in perſon, the affair of the teſtament made in my favour by the generous deceaſed; but if I were not prevented by the duties of my ſtation, and the preſent tempeſtuous ſtate of Italy, you ſee, that by renouncing all claims to this inheritance, ſuch a ſtep becomes wholly unneceſſary. I know not whether my renunciation will be approved by all; but I know very well, that neither my honour nor conſcience would permit me to abuſe the exceſſive partiality of a poor woman, to the detriment of her relations, and that even the want of neceſſaries would be

* Having communicated a few MS. ſheets of theſe Memoirs to my old and much honoured friend Mr. Maſon, for whoſe learning, judgment, and genius, I have always had the higheſt reſpect; in peruſing the preſent letter, when he came to this part, he wrote with a pencil the following opinion, which, as it confirms my own, I ſhall take the liberty to inſert:

" I think this paragraph a proof that there had been no-
" thing criminal between him and Marianne. Such a
" man as M. writing to a friend, would have expreſſed in
" this place ſome compunction, at leaſt he would not have
" invoked the Deity in ſuch a ſolemn manner." M.

much more tolerable to me, than the ſhame of ſuch an action.

Vienna, April 3, 1734.

He ſays to the ſame friend, in another letter, written May 22, of the ſame year: "If I ſhould affect the philoſopher, and tell you that I was ſorry to hear that my country had been ſo laviſh of applauſe for the renunciation I have lately made, I ſhould be very inſincere. It pleaſes me much, and will fortify my opinion of the juſtice of the act; indeed, I regard theſe praiſes as a ſurpriſing inſtance of affection from ſo great a mother, even to the meaneſt of her ſons."

END OF THE SECOND SECTION.

SECTION

SECTION III.

AMONG the letters of Metaſtaſio that have been publiſhed, there are three to his father, and many to his brother Leopold, at Rome. Theſe laſt, chiefly without date, are generally filled with family concerns, and kind counſel. Among many excellent maxims of prudence and good conduct, Metaſtaſio chiefly recommends diligence to his brother, who ſeems, through his means, to have been inveſted with an office under the Pontifical government. "Never," ſays he, "defer till to-morrow what you can do to-day. A weight divided into ſmall portions, becomes inſupportable when united."

It is pleaſing to humanity to find what reſpect and attention the Poet enjoins his brother towards their aged parent, whom he ſupported in eaſe and comfort, to the end of a long life.

"Though I am certain," ſays he to his brother, "that you will not be deficient in duty, yet ſuffer me to recommend to you not to ſpare *me*, in any expence that can remove inconvenience or add to his comfort. If he were not our father, his age and infirmities

firmities would demand our moſt tender compaſſion; conſider then what we owe him, as ſons."

But in the anecdotes, that have been lately publiſhed, concerning the private life of our admirable Poet*; among his peculiarities, ſome are related which ſeem too ſerious for ridicule, and from which I ſhould be ſorry, for his honour, and for the honour of human nature, not to be able to defend him. What a diſgrace to practical virtue and benevolence would it be, to find a writer whoſe works breathe the pureſt principles of virtue and morality, and whoſe life, during more than fifty years reſidence at Vienna, was unimpeachably innocent, and exemplary in the exerciſe of religious duties; to want, not only filial and fraternal affection, but even thoſe common and laudable partialities for his kindred and countrymen, to which the moſt vulgar minds are naturally prone! It has been ſaid †, with a degree of levity and ſport, perhaps more *pour egaier les choſes*, and enliven a period, than from conviction, or a wiſh to degrade the Poet's moral character, that "he refuſed to hear, and took

* *Elogj Italiani dell* Andrea Rubbi. Ven. 1782.

† Ib. *Annotazioni all' Elogio di Pietro Metaſtaſio*, Art. *Pregiudizj*.

pains

pains not to know whether he had in his latter days, any one relation left in the world." And on this uncharitable assertion, the world is to make its *observations and reflections?* For my own part, I shall make no reflections injurious to the poet or his censurers, but furnish candid minds with the following letters, and extracts from others, written by Metastasio to his father and brother, as a complete answer to hasty conclusions of his want of affection for his family.

LETTER I.

TO FELICE TRAPPASSI, THE FATHER OF METASTASIO.

You cannot imagine with what joy I learned from your most respected letter, the recovery of that health, for which I have ever been so anxious.

I return you my most humble thanks for the care which you have kindly taken to remove from my mind such painful anxiety, and I pray to God, that in lengthening your days, he would deign to add to them a portion of my own, provided I have time sufficient

allowed me once more to embrace you, and to render you, in perſon, freſh teſtimonies of my reſpect and reverence.

I am unable, to-day, to write to our dear Perroni. But fail not, I entreat you, to let him know that I am well, and to embrace and ſalute him moſt heartily. Humbly begging you to be careful of your health, and to grant me your benediction.

I remain, &c.

Vienna, Feb. 7, 1739.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE juſt received your moſt reſpected letter of the thirteenth of January, full of all thoſe expreſſions of paternal affection, which though familar to your partial love towards me, if repeated a thouſand and a thouſand times, would always impreſs my mind with new delight, and exact from me new gratitude.

I aſſure you that there is nothing I more ardently wiſh than the ſeeing, embracing, and giving you new teſtimonies of that filial tenderneſs and reſpect which are ſo juſtly your

your due; though the narrow limits preſcribed by fortune to my powers, have not yet allowed me to convince you of them by any other means.

Hitherto I have ſeen no likelihood of the pontifical intentions of kindneſs towards me, ending in any thing more than good wiſhes, upon which it would be very unſafe for hope to build. A thouſand embraces to my brother, and to all our family.

Czà Katum, Feb. 9, 1743.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE duties of my employment, on occaſion of the nuptials of theſe Princes (*b*) have not permitted me ſooner to anſwer your moſt reſpected letter of laſt month. Though I have no occaſion for new proofs, to convince me of your paternal tenderneſs, I receive an inexpreſſible pleaſure from the affectionate expreſſions which you have been pleaſed to

(*b*) Prince Charles of Lorrain with Marianna, Archdutcheſs of Auſtria, ſiſter to Tereſa, afterwards Empreſs-queen.

beſtow upon me; and be aſſured, that if I had leiſure, my correſpondence would exceed all bounds, if ſo ſacred a duty could admit of exceſs.

The moſt precious proof you can give me of your affection, is the care of your health; and confirming me in the ardent hope which I have long cheriſhed of, ſometime or other, again embracing you, and receiving, in perſon, your paternal benediction.

Vienna, Jan. 25, 1744.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR affectionate letter of the 16th of laſt month, was moſt grateful to me; as is every thing that comes from you, as well for the happy news of your health, as for the proofs it contained of your affection; which, though unneceſſary perſuaſives, are always welcome conſolations. It is moſt certain, that the turbulent ſituation in which I find myſelf, renders the ſtructure of happineſs, which I have been ſo many years forming, leſs and leſs ſolid. This makes me more melancholy than

than I uſed naturally to be; but at preſent, thank God, in ſpite of the terrible aſpect of public affairs, by cloſe application to my books, which keeps off painful reflections, I am inſenſibly become more tranquil. I imitate you in wiſhing the proſperity which you preſage, but not in expecting it. I have been ſo long deluded by hope, that, at preſent, the more ſhe appears to ſmile, the leſs confidence I place in her; and this incredulity, renders the ſtrokes of ill fortune leſs afflicting. You do extremely well to continue to cheriſh hope for yourſelf; by that means, you have the enviable faculty of anticipating expected bleſſings, and enjoying them as much at a diſtance, as if they were in your poſſeſſion; and no ſooner does one ſet of imaginary bleſſings vaniſh, than another ariſes, to conſole the time preſent, for the diſappointment of the paſt. For my misfortune, I am very barren of all ſuch deluſive hopes, which indeed affect me ſo differently, that what is balm to your mind, becomes poiſon to mine.

Would to heaven you were a prophet, and that I could give you leſs limitted ſigns of my love and reſpect.

Vienna, June 13, 1744.

At this time, his father cheriſhed the moſt brilliant expectations from his ſon's exalted ſituation at Vienna, and the late profeſſions of kindneſs towards him from the Pope.

In anſwer to a letter from his brother, about collecting and printing his works, in which he ſeems to have entertained ſplendid hopes from the effects of a dedication to the Elector Palatine, he ſays, "Whatever you do with thoſe trifles, I adviſe you not to be too ſanguine in your expectations from that quarter. Neither princes nor their ſatellites, have the will or the power to reward talents in the manner good people are apt to imagine. Indeed, I know not what their definition of merit may be, and have too profound a reſpect for it, to attempt its inveſtigation; I ſhall leave it, therefore, among thoſe *myſteries* which (though not contrary) are ſuperior to reaſon."

Though theſe fraternal letters are written on ſubjects little intereſting to the public, there are frequent traits in them, which if not to be rigidly ſtyled *wit*, or *humour*, amount to ſomething between both: a half-and-half pleaſantry, peculiar to our author, and perhaps to his language. I ſhall venture to inſtance a few of theſe, without much confidence

confidence in my abilities of transfuſing their ſpirit into Engliſh.

In a very ſhort letter to his brother, of only one page, he ſays: "When you ſee our dear and moſt placid *Jomelli*, pray ſpur him up to finiſh the work he has undertaken for the court of Spain. I have a commiſſion to give him a jog, no eaſy taſk, at this diſtance *(c)*. Now the d—l would have me turn over, but *non concurrimus*."

The poſt days being changed at Vienna, he tells his brother, that having forgotten the alteration, he had been an unpunctual correſpondent without deſign, or convenience to himſelf from the delay! It is hard, ſays he, "to get rid of old habits,—Nor is it leſs difficult to change Monday to Saturday, than to live in an *oblate ſpheroid*, in a world *flattened* at the poles by new aſtronomers, after ſo long imagining that I lived in one that was round."

Having written a *Cantata*, for the birth of an Arch-dutcheſs, he deſires his brother not to mention it; for if the mere title is

(c) Jomelli, who compoſed ſo much, and ſo admirably, when he ſet about it, was naturally indolent, and unwilling to work; though equally unwilling to diſoblige his friends by a refuſal, when they intreated him to exerciſe his talents.

known, it will ſoon be thought an old production. It is named, ſays he, "*La Gara*, pray acknowledge it for your nephew."

He tells his brother, who conſulted him about publiſhing a treatiſe, which he had ready for the preſs, that "the height of folly in an author, is the printing his works at his own expence. He muſt be initiated in the myſteries of mercenary aſſociates, ere he can get out of ſuch traffic with whole bones."

During the laſt war between the Empreſs-queen, and the late King of Pruſſia, Metaſtaſio, who was very much attached to his Imperial Patroneſs, frequently ſends his brother the political news of the times. "At preſent ſays he, we have more troops in Bohemia, than the King of Pruſſia expects; and as he is now marched into that kingdom, if he chuſes to dance, there will be no want of muſic: and the country-dances will be very lively."——"The war will become more and more violent every day, unleſs the Engliſh change their imperious tone, a difficult metamorphoſe."—"The King of Pruſſia has made ſeveral movements, which have called upon our generals for all their attention; but, however, they ſeem only

only to ariſe from that kind of reſtleſſneſs, which makes ſick and infirm people, always hope to acquire eaſe by a change of poſition."

" I am tired of a little journey into Parnaſſus which I made in a great hurry, by order of our Court. And yet, I write to you the inſtant I return, with my boots ſtill on. Pray be thankful that you have not been neglected in the midſt of ſuch ſufferings."

" *Artaſerſe* is the moſt fortunate of all my children. The reſt have experienced various viciſſitudes; but this, through the obſtinacy of fate, has always been in the ſtirrups (*d*). So that dramas have their conſtellations."

The correſpondence with his brother Leopold, continued till December 17th, 1762, about which time he probably died. In letters to his banker and friend, Signor Argenvilliers, at Rome, which began in 1750, after his father's deceaſe, he conſtantly mentions his brother, and gives inſtructions for the payment of ſums allotted for his uſe. In 1759, Leopold had a very dangerous fever, which greatly alarmed Metaſtaſio, who, in

(*d*) Always ſucceſsful, never *diſmounted*.

writing

writing to Signor Argenvilliers, expreſſes his anxiety in a manner too affectionate for a man who "refuſed to hear, and took pains not to know, whether he had any one relation in the world."

LETTER V.

TO SIGNOR FRANCESCO ARGENVILLIERS, BANKER, AT ROME.

You have furniſhed me with a new proof, my dear friend, of the goodneſs of your heart, in the affectionate care you have taken of my brother, the Advocate, and of my tranquillity, by viſiting him yourſelf, and faithfully informing me of the ſtate in which you found him, during the violent fever with which he was attacked. He has written me a ſhort letter, which has given me a heartake, by its brevity. I entreat you to ſpare me in nothing that can contribute in the leaſt to his aſſiſtance; I cannot explain to you what will be my anxiety, till the next poſt. Though your kind letter gives great hopes, yet you know, by experience, what are the emotions of the heart, for the danger of a brother.

Vienna, Sept. 10, 1759.

LET-

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

I WANT expreſſions to deſcribe to you, my dear and worthy friend, the tenderneſs and gratitude with which I feel myſelf attached to you. The care which you take, not only of my brother's health, but of my eaſe of mind, ſurpaſſes all bounds; and that, not merely in the firſt letter concerning the dreadful malady, but the ſecond, written by another hand. God preſerve you for the conſolation of your friends, and the honour of humanity, which has not many ſuch to boaſt. You have encouraged me to hope the beſt, and it is from your kindneſs that I can expect tranquillity. Pray thank my ſiſter, who, according to your account, has diſtinguiſhed herſelf by the exerciſe of her duty upon this occaſion. Oh, my dear friend, if I could but expreſs what my heart feels for you! But do you, who are capable of ſuch actions, judge of their effects, and believe me, while I have exiſtence, &c.

P. S. Pray give me credit for whatever may be wanting on account of my brother's illneſs,

illneſs, in caſe the expence ſhould exceed the effects which I had in your hands.

Vienna, Sep. 13, 1759.

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

All my expectations of letters from Rome have failed me to-day; imagine therefore, my dear friend, what agitation my mind muſt ſuffer, already trembling with doubt for my brother's ſafety. I know the excellency of my dear Sig. Argenvilliers' heart, by a thouſand proofs; ſo that I cannot imagine it poſſible for you to neglect me at ſuch a critical moment. But affection, always timid and ſuſpicious, ſuggeſts to me that you have perhaps been ſilent through prudence; or, through delicacy, have incloſed your letter to ſome other perſon, who may prepare me for the event. Forgive, my moſt excellent friend, theſe human doubts. I do not try to ſuppreſs humanity, and confeſs, that I have at preſent no power over my affliction. But here comes another ſervant, who ſays that the Roman letters are not yet arrived,

ſo that I return to the hope, with which your laſt kind letter inſpired me, of better tidings. I ſhall leave this open as long as poſſible, and, in the mean time, embrace you with that reſpectful eſteem, which ſo dear and worthy a friend merits. Addio.

P. S. The letters from Rome of the 5th inſtant, are at laſt arrived, as I have ſeen ſeveral in the hands of friends to whom they were addreſſed; but there are none for me! I know not what to think, and therefore relapſe into my former agitation."

Vienna, Sep. 17, 1759.

His brother, however, recovered of this indiſpoſition, as we find by a letter to the ſame correſpondent, written three days after the above.

" I beg your pardon, my moſt admirable friend, for the inquietude which my preceding letter muſt have occaſioned. This inſtant two of your letters are brought to me, one written on the 5th, and another on the 8th of the preſent month, I know not by what accident the firſt was delayed, which, by not being delivered on Sunday, ſet me upon making cruel almanacs. Thank God for deigning to extend his mercy to us all; and

and thank you for the numerous demonſtrations you have given, of the temper of your own mind."

After fifty-two years abſence from Rome, Metaſtaſio ſeems to have ſurvived all his relations and juvenile friends, and to have made a juſt and equitable will in favour of the Martinetz family, with whom having conſtantly reſided in tranquillity and comfort, to make them his heirs was a laudable manifeſtation of his friendſhip and gratitude. His benevolence and ſenſibility have never been called in queſtion by his countrymen, who, on the contrary, have extolled theſe qualities in him, even more than his genius for poetry.

And now having ſpoken of his birth, adoption, education, firſt poetical productions, attachment to a female friend, affliction for her loſs, and affection for his family, we ſhall proceed in the next ſection to his writings, in chronological order, and conſider him more particularly as a Lyric Poet and a Critic.

END OF THE THIRD SECTION.

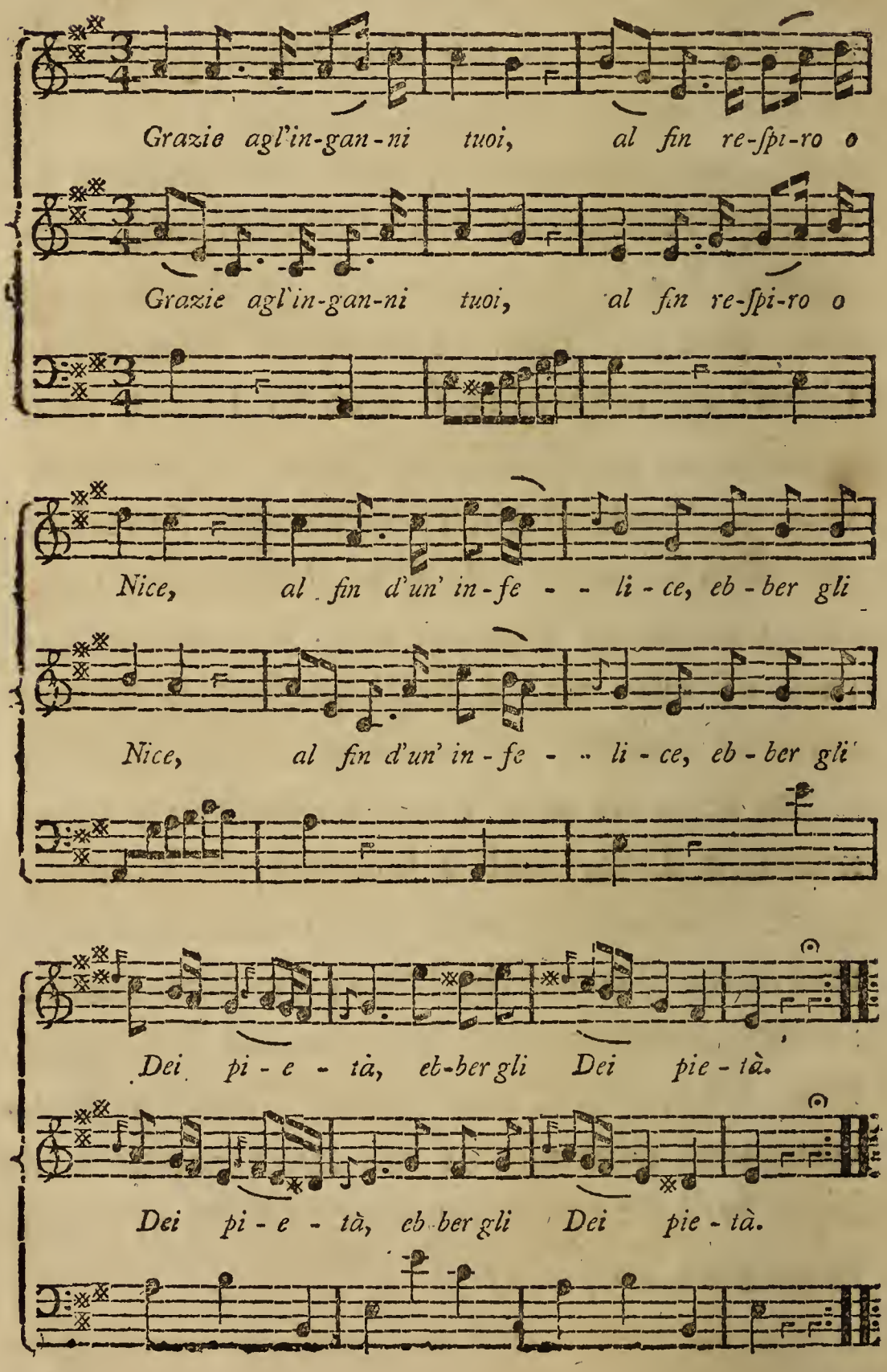
SECTION

SECTION IV.

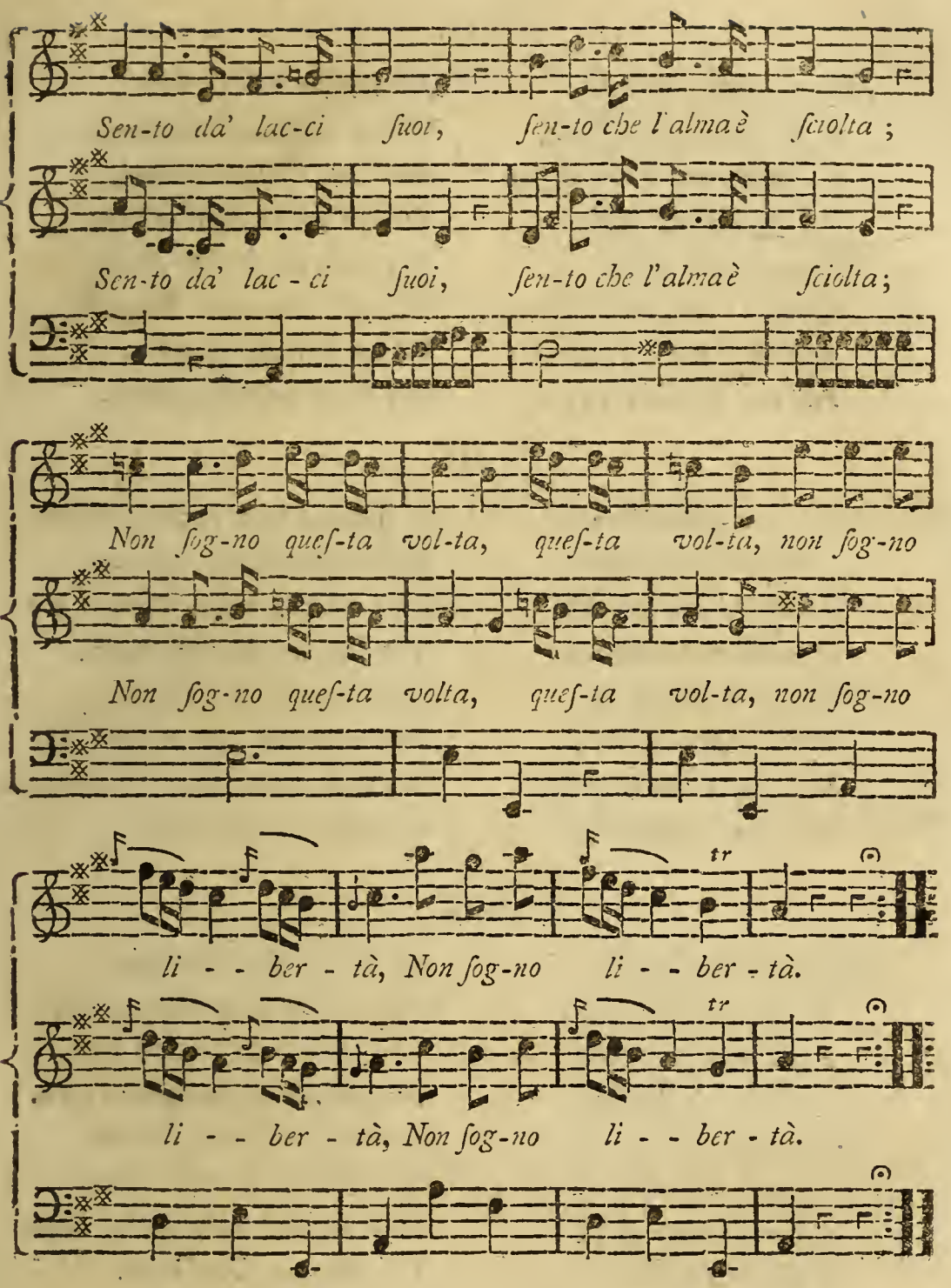
THE year 1733 ſeems to have been extremely fertile in the Parnaſſian territories of our bard. Not only the opera of *Olimpiade*, and *Demofoonte*, with the oratorio of *Giuſeppe riconoſciuto*, but his charming canzonet, *La Libertà*, were productions of this year. This celebrated canzonet: *Grazie agl'inganni tuoi*, was ſet by the bard himſelf, to an air of which *Cocchi*, when he was in England thirty years ago, furniſhed me with a copy. And as Metaſtaſio confeſſed to me at Vienna, that he was the author of this air, I ſhall preſent it to my muſical readers, as a curioſity. For though it has been ſet as a Venetian Ballad, a Canzonet, a Duo, and a Cantata, by ſo many great compoſers, to much more elaborate and fanciful muſic than this; yet Metaſtaſio's melody, which has been compoſed more than fifty years, has ſtill its merit; and, compared with airs of the ſame period and kind, will be found ſuperior to moſt of them in elegant ſimplicity.

La Libertà, a Nice. Canzonetta.

Parole e Musica di Metastasio.


Grazie agl'in-gan-ni tuoi, al fin re-spi-ro o
Grazie agl'in-gan-ni tuoi, al fin re-spi-ro o
Nice, al fin d'un' in-fe - - li-ce, eb-ber gli
Nice, al fin d'un' in-fe - - li-ce, eb-ber gli
Dei pi-e-tà, eb-ber gli Dei pie-tà.
Dei pi-e-tà, eb-ber gli Dei pie-tà.

Sents


Sen-to da' lac-ci ſuoi, ſen-to che l'alma è ſciolta ;
Sen-to da' lac - ci ſuoi, ſen-to che l'alma è ſciolta;
Non ſog-no queſ-ta vol-ta, queſ-ta vol-ta, non ſog-no
Non ſog-no queſ-ta volta, queſ-ta vol-ta, non ſog-no
li - - ber - tà, Non ſog-no li - - ber - tà.
li - - ber - tà, Non ſog-no li - - ber - tà.

INDIFFERENCE.

TO METASTASIO'S OWN MUSIC.

Niſa, thy pow'r is flown,
I thank thee for my cure;
The gods have mercy ſhewn,
Thy tricks no more allure.

From all thy chains I feel
My ſoul, at length, is free;
No dream I now reveal,
I wake to liberty.

II.

Mancò l'antico ardore,
E ſon tranquillo a ſegno,
Che in me non trova ſdegno
Per maſcherarſi amor.
Non cangio più colore,
Quando il tuo nome aſcolto;
Quando ti miro in volto,
Più non mi batte il cor.

All former ardor's fled,
Which petulance could move;
And that diſdain is dead,
Which maſks itſelf in love.
Nor does my colour change,
Whoe'er thy name repeats;
When o'er thy face I range,
My heart no longer beats.

III.

Sogno, ma te non miro
Sempre ne' ſogni miei;
Mi deſto, e tu non ſei
Il primo mio penſier.
Lungi da te m'aggiro,
Senza bramarti mai;
Son teco, e non mi fai,
Nè pena, nè piacer.

In dreams thou'rt now forgot,
And caſt on Lethe's brink;
And when I wake, thou'rt not
The firſt on whom I think.
To diſtant climes I ſteer,
Nor miſs thee day or night;
Nor doſt thou, when thou'rt near,
Or pain, or joy excite.

IV.

Di tua beltà ragiono,
Nè intenerir mi ſento;
I torti miei ramento,
E non mi ſo ſdegnar.
Confuſo più non ſono,
Quando mi vieni appreſſo;
Col mio rivale iſteſſo
Poſſo di te parlar.

Of all thy charms I now
Can calmly think and ſpeak,
Can trace each broken vow,
Nor means of vengeance ſeek.
Confus'd no more I ſeem
Whene'er I ſee thee near;
And ſhouldſt thou be the theme
Can rivals patient hear.

V.

Volgimi il guardo altero,
Parlami in volto umano;
Il tuo diſprezzo è vano,
E' vano il tuo favor;
Che più l'uſato impero
Quei labbri in me non hanno;
Quegli occhi più non ſanno,
La via di queſto cor.

Now if thou angry look,
Or love and kindneſs feign;
Frowns undiſturb'd I brook,
And feel thy favour vain.
Thoſe lips, however kind,
Have loſt their magic art;
Nor can thine eyes now find
The paſſage to my heart.

Quel,

VI.

Quel, che or m'alletta, o ſpiace,
Se lieto, o meſto or ſono,
Già non è più tuo dono,
Già colpa tua non è;
Che ſenza te mi piace
La ſelva, il colle, il prato;
Ogni ſoggiorno ingrato
M'annoja ancor con te.

What pain or pleaſure gives,
What joy or ſorrow brings,
From thee no good receives,
From thee no evil ſprings.
Without thee, I delight
In woods and flow'ry meads;
And with thee, hate the ſight
Of barren fields and weeds.

VII.

Odi s'io ſon ſincero;
Ancor mi ſembra bella,
Ma non mi ſembri quella,
Che paragon non ha.
E (non t'offenda il vero)
Nel tuo leggiadro aſpetto
Or vedo alcun difetto,
Che mi parea beltà.

Nor does thy face, though fair,
At preſent ſo excel,
That I could ſafely ſwear
It has no parallel.
And let not truth offend,
Should I to think incline
Some features I could mend,
Which once I thought divine.

VIII.

Quando lo ſtral ſpezzai,
(Confeſſo il mio roſſore)
Spezzar m' inteſi il core,
Mi parve di morir.
Ma per uſcir di guai,
Per non vederſi oppreſſo,
Per racquiſtar ſe ſteſſo
Tutto ſi può ſoffrir.

When firſt I drew the dart
(With ſhame my cheek's on fire)
Such torture tore my heart,
I thought I ſhould expire.
But to relieve ſuch pain,
To fly oppreſſion's ſphere,
And ſway o'er ſelf to gain,
What ſuffering's too ſevere?

IX.

Nel viſco, in cui s'avvenne
Quell'augellin talora,
Laſcia le penne ancora,
Ma torna in libertà.
Poi le perdute penne
Il pochi dì rinnova,
Cauto divien per prova,
Nè più tradir ſi fa.

When caught in viſcous ſnare
A bird, himſelf to free,
Will ſome few feathers ſpare,
To gain his liberty.
But plumage will return;
Again he'll mount the ſkies;
Nor prudence has to learn,
By ſad experience wiſe.

X.

So che non credi eſtinto
In me l'incendio antico,
Perchè ſi ſpeſſo il dico,
Perchè tacer non ſo.
Quel naturale iſtinto,
Nice, a parlar mi ſprona,
Per cui ciaſcun ragiona
De' riſchj che paſsò.

But ſtill I know thou'lt ſay,
My cure is not complete:
As, though 'tis told each day,
The tale I ſtill repeat.
My inſtinct is the ſame
As that of men who roam,
And with delight proclaim
The dangers they've o'ercome.

XI.

Dopo il crudel cimento,
Narra i paſſati ſdegni;
Di ſue ferite i ſegni,
Moſtra il guerrier così.
Moſtra così contento,
Schiavo che uſci di pena,
La barbara catena,
Che ſtraſcinava un dì.

Thus ſoldiers when return'd
Victorious from a war,
Tell how they laurels earn'd,
And proudly ſhew each ſcar.
And thus the galley-ſlave
Releas'd from cruel chains,
On ſhackles ſtill will rave
And ſhew their deep remains.

XII.

Parlo, ma ſol parlando,
Me ſoddisfar procuro;
Parlo, ma nulla io curo
Che tu mi preſti fe.
Parlo, ma non dimando
Se approvi i detti mici;
Ne ſe tranquilla ſei
Nel ragionar, di me.

Of liberty I ſpeak
To pleaſe myſelf alone,
But not thy peace to break
Or to diſplay my own.
I ſpeak, nor aſk if now
My reas'ning pleaſes thee;
Nor care if calmly thou
Canſt bear to ſpeak of me.

XIII.

Io laſcio un' inconſtante:
Tu perdi un cor ſincero:
Non ſo di noi primiero,
Chi s'abbia a conſolar.
So che un ſi fido amante
Non troverà più Nice;
Che un' altra ingannatrice
E' facile a trovar.

I quit a fickle fair,
Thou'lt loſe a heart that's true;
Nor do I know or care
Who moſt has cauſe to rue.
But this I know, a ſwain
So true will ne'er be found;
But females falſe and vain
Throughout the world abound.

There

There are two tranſlations of this celebrated canzonet in Dodſley's *Collection of Poems*; ſeveral in French; and among the reſt, one by Rouſſeau, which he ſet himſelf, three ſeveral times, to airs which are engraved in the poſthumous collection of his ſongs. But among all the verſions that I have ſeen, no one ſeems to have been attempted in the *ſame meaſure* as the original, or that can be applied to the muſic of any one of the compoſers by whom it has been ſet.

For the ſake therefore of Metaſtaſio's melody, this Engliſh tranſlation, *totidem verbis*, has been attempted. Indeed the double Rhymes are ſtill wanting for the Muſic, and the exact ſimilitude of the numbers; but it ſeems hardly poſſible to find ſo many tolerable double Rhymes in our language as would be neceſſary, without degrading the verſe into doggerel: as ſix out of eight lines in every ſtanza of the original, end with a diſſyllabic word.

The Imperial Laureate's works were now ſufficiently conſiderable to intereſt the bookſellers throughout Italy; they had already been collected and publiſhed at Rome and Naples, but in an incorrect and inelegant manner. *Bettinelli*, an eminent printer at

Venice, opened a correſpondence with Metaſtaſio upon this ſubject, in 1732, ſoliciting his advice and aſſiſtance in preparing a new impreſſion. Beſides ſmaller pieces, and three oratorios, his great operas amounted now to twelve. Metaſtaſio's anſwers to the letters of Bettinelli have been preſerved and inſerted in the late collection, though moſt readers will, perhaps, think that they might have been ſuppreſſed without injury to the public intereſt, or the author's fame. And yet, the proſe of Metaſtaſio is ſo pure, clear, eaſy, and elegant, that the moſt ſhort and unimportant of his letters are precious for the ſtyle, however unintereſting may be the ſubjects which produced them.

Dr. Johnſon uſed to ſay, that the bookſellers were an author's beſt patrons; and Metaſtaſio, though he had an Emperor for his protector, ſeems to have treated Bettinelli with that conſideration which he thought due to a benefactor. And, perhaps, no bookſeller was addreſſed with more politeneſs by an author ſo high in ſtation and public favour, ſince the invention of the preſs.

If, therefore, theſe letters to Betinelli had no other merit than their urbanity, they may have their uſe, as models of good breeding

between

between perſons, who, regarding each other with mutual jealouſy, are ſuſceptible of all the irritability which that paſſion is apt to excite, in what ever form it aſſumes.

LETTER I.

TO SIG. JOSEPH BETINELLI.

SIR,

AFTER returning you due thanks for the undeſerved confidence which you are pleaſed to manifeſt in the merit of my works, as well as for your obliging attention in communicating to me your plan, previous to its execution, I am bound in gratitude to diſſuade you from the projected enterpriſe. My reaſons are, that being at preſent in want of ſufficient leiſure to arrange and reviſe productions, which formerly with much impetuoſity rather flew than came from my hands, they could make but an inconſiderable miſcellany of things diſapproved by myſelf, and to which, for the moſt part, the laſt poliſh is wanting. And if ſuch an edition would ſuffice, you have been anticipated by Sig. Pietro Leoni, the bookſeller at Rome, who has already printed a collection of all my poetry, to my own great ſorrow,

without conſidering the objections juſt mentioned. If, however, you have no repugnance to ſuſpend the execution of your plan for a ſhort time, I ſhould wiſh to collect, reviſe, and arrange all my poetical compoſitions; to write a treatiſe on the Italian drama, for which I have all the materials ready, and then publiſh a neat edition, in which we might mutually aſſiſt each other. But for ſuch an undertaking, leiſure (a ſcarce commodity with me at preſent) will be neceſſary.

However, by working a little at a time, during the intervals of my uſual employment, I ſhould not deſpair of accompliſhing ſuch a deſign. Aſſure yourſelf that I ſhall be much at your ſervice, and that I am, with a due ſenſe of my obligations to you, &c.

Vienna, June 14, 1732.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

It mortifies me extremely, not to be able to anſwer your moſt obliging ſolicitations, with that promptitude which they deſerve. But my occupations at this court are ſo inceſſant, that I can procure no leiſure for

finiſhing what I planned in Italy: hence, the treatiſe I mentioned to you before, ſtill remains in the ſame ſtate; and what is yet leſs promiſing, I ſee no likelihood of enjoying the neceſſary tranquillity for making it fit for the public eye.

But this does not appear to me an objection ſufficient to prevent your preparing the impreſſion of my dramatic works, which you had in meditation. I am however ſo little perſuaded of their merit, that I ſhould never have dared to adviſe ſuch an undertaking; and indeed you may remember that I took ſome pains to diſcourage it, by ſuggeſting to you the difficulties which, in my opinion, you would have to encounter, and particularly thoſe ariſing from the Roman edition. But if you perſiſt in your reſolution, and will relinquiſh the idea of waiting for the treatiſe, I can offer you no better ſervice, than that of furniſhing you with copies of thoſe impreſſions of my dramas which were printed under my own eye, and correcting ſuch errors as had eſcaped me and others before.

For this purpoſe, I have already given commiſſion in Italy for collecting the opera books, which ſhall be ſent to you as ſoon as poſſible.

poſſible. In the mean time, I ſhould be glad to be informed of the ſize, paper, and character, in which this new edition is to be executed; the beauty and correctneſs of which, and a moderate number of copies, are all the rewards I propoſe to myſelf, for the trouble and inconvenience which I am willing to undertake.

Vienna, Feb. 28, 1733.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

As ſoon as I had anſwered your laſt letter, I wrote to my brother *Leopoldo Metaſtaſio*, at Rome, to uſe his utmoſt endeavours to find, for your uſe, all my poetical compoſitions; tranſmitting to him, at the ſame time, a paper of inſtructions for their arrangement, to be conveyed to you by any perſon whom you ſhould appoint to receive them. But this is not the greateſt difficulty. It is neceſſary for you to be informed, that the ſucceſſors of *Baglioni* and *Carlo Buon-arrigo*, propoſe a ſimilar plan. And without conſulting me, have procured at Rome, copies of all my writings that have been hitherto

publiſhed.

publiſhed. Now as I have no inedited work ready for publication, I cannot intimidate them by promiſing a more ample edition. You will make ſome uſe of this intelligence, I hope, which I communicate to you in honour, that you may avoid an expence, which, in all probability, will not turn out to your advantage. If, however, you ſtill perſiſt in your plan, you may depend on every aſſiſtance in my power to render it perfect; and, when completed, if you honour me with a few copies, I ſhall regard them as a free gift, and a teſtimony of your generoſity and regard.

Vienna, April 18, 1733.

As this is the firſt edition of the works of Metaſtaſio, in which the poet intereſted himſelf, we ſhall not wholly quit his correſpondence with Betinelli, till its publication. After two other letters on the ſubject, he ſays in a third:

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this morning received information from Naples, that Riccardi, the printer, has

has either finiſhed, or will finiſh in a ſhort time, a new impreſſion of all my works that have been hitherto publiſhed; but in ſo confuſed, careleſs, and miſerable a manner, that my friends at Naples, who are numerous, are extremely offended. I ſhall immediately write to different perſons there, and deſire them to inform the public of the neat edition which you are now printing, and of which you would do well to tranſmit thither a ſpecimen. The inedited opera, at leaſt, cannot be in the other edition, and there are many circumſtances which will render yours infinitely ſuperior.

Vienna, July 11, 1733.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE received a copy of the addreſs to the public, in the propoſals for a ſubſcription, and ſhall make uſe of it. It is very well written, though with great partiality for me. It would give me pleaſure to be informed who drew it up. I now ſend you *Ezio*, corrected by a friend, and next week, ſhall forward to you a new opera. You

muſt

muſt not forget to ſend copies of your propoſals to Rome and Naples, before the Neapolitan edition is further diſperſed.

Auguſt 22, 1733.

Betinelli, about this time, ſeems to have loſt a little ground in the favour of Metaſtaſio, by haſtily and careleſsly printing *Didone* from an incorrect copy; and by the impetuoſity with which the ſheets of the new edition of his entire works, were working off.

" Your ſcrupulous punctuality with the public," ſays he, " like other exceſſes, counteracts itſelf: for by too much haſte, you will do the public little good, and me leſs.

In your hurry, you have already forgot a correction which I ſent you long ſince, with earneſt entreaties that it might be attended to, and with which you promiſed to comply.

You know that all the world is in the practice of commerce, and mutually exchanging what they can ſpare, for what they want. You are bound to have the ſame regard for *my honour*, as I am bound to have for *your intereſt*. But I hope you will forgive my ſincerity, if I ſay that, hitherto, it ſeems as

if you had neglected this rule in our correſpondence, though the diſintereſted manner with which I treated you, certainly merited ſome return of attention.

" Notwithſtanding this cauſe of complaint, on Saturday I ſhall ſend you *Catone*, corrected, with an almoſt total change of the third act, which you will print both ways, to diſtinguiſh your edition from all others. From this time, I ſhall every week ſend you ſomething ready for the compoſitor, if you will but have patience; which, however, I little expect.

" I beg you to let me have as ſoon as poſſible, two copies of the firſt volume, with a print on good paper, to preſent to my Auguſt Patrons.

" Excuſe the poetical frankneſs with which I have written, and believe me equally ſincere in offering you my beſt ſervices."

In November, he ſays: " I now ſend you another opera, which will be the laſt; as, with this, we ſhall conclude the collection of operas, and begin to print the other pieces. It does not ſeem to me, as if there would be materials ſufficient for another volume, unleſs, contrary to my inclination, you print the compoſitions of my early and inexpe-

inexperienced youth, which I have long diſapproved. You muſt explain yourſelf clearly on this ſubject, that I may take my meaſures accordingly.

"I thank you for the copies which you have ſent me bound, for their Imperial Majeſties, and I hope, when I have time to examine them, that I ſhall ſtill find new cauſe for thanks."

In the next letter, he tells Betinelli, that he had read the proof-ſheets of theſe dramatic pieces, and found ſo little to correct, that it ſeemed a uſeleſs expence of poſtage, to ſend them back. Of three of theſe dramas, he gives the following account.

La Conteſa de' Numi,
"The contention of the Gods,"

Was ſet by Vinci, and performed at Rome, in the Palace of Cardinal Polignac, the French Ambaſſador, on the birth of the Dauphin, 1729.

Enea nell' Eliſi,
"Æneas in the Elyſian Fields, or
The Temple of Eternity,"

Set by Fouchs, was ſung in the Garden of the Imperial Palace, called the *Favourite*, in celebration of the Emperor's birth-day, 1731.

L' Aſilo d' Amore
" The Aſylum of Love."

This dramatic entertainment, ſet by Caldara, was repreſented at Lintz, Auguſt 28th, 1732, in celebration of the birth-day of the Empreſs, who was preſent at the performance.

For the orthography, he adviſes the corrector of the preſs, to follow that of Facciolati, printed for the uſe of the Seminary, at Padua, which he likes better than any other. All Metaſtaſio's opinions in literature, ſeem worth recording.

" Next week, (he ſays,) I ſhall ſend you my Oratorios, which now amount to five. Theſe have been collected into a volume at Vienna; but are ſo ill-printed, that I am aſhamed to preſent them to my Auguſt Patron."

This edition was not finiſhed till 1734. It was terminated by the following pieces, which made a ſeventh volume,

Angelica, a Serenata, written at Naples, 1722. *La Morte di Catone*, a Poem in *Terza Rima*, not intended for muſic.

L' Origine delle Legge; the ſame.

" Theſe compoſitions, ſays Metaſtaſio, are, in my opinion, ſo feeble, that I have not

not had courage to re-peruſe them, through the dread of the pain it would give me to recollect that they were going to be laid before the public, who, in reading them, will not always remember, in my excuſe, the time of life in which they were written." He conſtantly recommended to every ſubſequent Editor of his works, to place theſe Poems, in a ſeparate, and laſt volume.

The Poet ſeems to have been much pleaſed, in general, with Betinelli's attention, while this edition was printing; and ſays in a letter to him, dated April 10th, 1734. "I have received the laſt ſheet of the third volume, and return you due thanks, not only for that, but for the grateful and obliging ſentiments, which, by magnifying the little that I have contributed towards the new impreſſion, you have been pleaſed to expreſs.

"Indeed you have now made me ſo much wiſh to merit the praiſes which you beſtow, that I beg you will afford me ſome further opportunity of obeying your commands.

"I ſend you the laſt Oratorio, which I have written *(e)*. This, of all my ſacred dramas,

(*e*) This muſt have been *Betulia liberata*, which was ſet by *Reutter*, for the Imperial Chapel, in 1734.

is that with which I am the leaſt diſpleaſed. I tranſmit a copy of it to you, that you may diſpoſe of it in ſuch a manner as ſhall be moſt uſeful to you."

This impreſſion muſt have had a very rapid ſale, as we find Metaſtaſio in correſpondence with the ſame publiſher, in July of the ſame year, on the ſubject of another edition.

" I return you my ſincere thanks, for the obliging attention with which you are pleaſed to treat me, in advertiſing me of your intended new edition of my works; and I wiſh it the ſame fate with the preceding, as a reward for your ſolicitude and care. I cannot but approve of your intention, having already had ſuch proofs of your prudence, as incline me to think that you have well weighed all circumſtances previous to the undertaking."

A few days after this was written, Metaſtaſio ſent Betinelli the following letter of thanks, for a pamphlet which he had tranſmitted to him, in which his Opera of *Demofoonte*, was very ſeverely treated.

LET-

LETTER VI.

TO SIGNOR BETINELLI.

How much am I obliged to you, for the care which you have kindly taken in tranſmitting to me the learned reflections on my *Demofoonte*. If I had leiſure to reply, the chief part of my anſwer would conſiſt of ſentiments of gratitude to the writer: ſo much higher does he think of my labours than I do myſelf.

I have run it through haſtily, between the time of receiving and anſwering it; but I ſhall frequently repeat the peruſal, no leſs for the diſcovery of my faults, than the improvement of my ſtyle. Oh, what inſtruction ſhould I not receive, if the author would publiſh the Tragedy which he promiſes! From the ſtudy of its perfections, I might more clearly ſee my own errors, even thoſe which he has neglected to ſpecify; thinking it ſufficient to inform his readers, that ſuch exiſted, and contenting himſelf with examplary charity, to allow, that I had purpoſely admitted many of the irregularities with which the piece abounds.

The parts of the pamphlet that you have ſent me, in which the author deſcends to particulars, contain reflections on the inconſiſtency of the characters of *Timanthes*, and *Creuſa*, and a parallel between Signor Apoſtolo Zeno and myſelf. As to the firſt, perhaps he is right; though I believe, that a perſon may act differently in different ſituations, without inconſiſtency of character. *Timanthes*, is a valiant young man, ſubject to the emotions of youth, though naturally reaſonable, and furniſhed by education with maxims ſuitable to perſons of his rank. When aſſaulted by paſſion, he is impetuous, violent, and inconſiderate. But when he has time to reflect, or any object preſent, reminds him of his duty, he is juſt, moderate, and rational. And in the whole courſe of the drama, that contraſt always appears, which ariſes either from the conflicting operations of the mind and heart, or of impetuoſity and reaſon. Thus Taſſo has drawn Rinaldo. When paſſion tranſports him, he ſays of Godfrey:

Venga egli, o mandi: io terrò fermo il piede:
Giudice ſian tra noi la ſorte, è l'arme:
Fera tragedia ei vuol, che s'appreſenti,
Per lor diporto, alle nemiche genti.

Then

Then let him come,——I here ſhall firm abide,
And arms and fate between us ſhall decide:
Soon ſhall our ſtrife in ſanguine torrents flow,
A proſpect grateful to the gazing foe!

Hoole's Tranſl. of Taſſo.

But when he has time to reflect, in cool blood, he ſays to the ſame Godfrey:

E s'io n'offeſi te, ben diſconforto
Ne ſentii poſcia, e penitenza al cuore;
Or vengo a' tuoi richiami, ed ogni emenda
Son pronto a far, che grato a te mi renda.

Too late convinc'd, the raſh offence I own;
And deep contrition ſince my ſoul has known.
By thee recall'd, I ſeek the camp again;
And may my future deeds thy grace obtain.

Hoole.

The ſame rule, in different proportion, has been obſerved in the character of *Creuſa*; a Princeſs wholly governed by the vanity of high rank and beauty. Offended by *Timanthes*, unexpectedly, in both, without a moment's time for reflection, ſhe breaks out into a deſire of vengeance; but after the firſt emotion, ſhe not only gives it up, but diſcovers it to be ill-founded, and is impelled by her reaſon, as in juſtice ſhe ought to be, to pity the very perſon, whom her revenge was purſuing.

This does not appear to me, inconſiſtency of character, but diverſity of ſituation, without which, every character would be inſipid and improbable. What man is always calm and reaſonable, or agitated, and violent? The firſt would be a divinity, the ſecond a wild beaſt. From the contraſt of theſe two univerſal principles, reaſon and paſſion, ariſes the diverſity in the characters of men, as each of theſe, or both prevail.

And this concurrence of different principles in the ſame perſon, reconciles the valour of Æneas with the tears he ſo frequently ſheds; the tranſports of Dido, with the good ſenſe of a foundreſs of an Empire; and juſtify Orlando,

Che per amor venne in furore, e matto,
D' uom, che ſi ſaggio era ſtimato prima.

"Who once the flower of arms, and wiſdom's boaſt,
By fatal love his manly ſenſes loſt."

Hoole's Arioſto.

But ſhall I communicate to you an idea that has ſtruck me? I believe the very learned author of the reflections, does not think preciſely as he writes. I ſuppoſe him to be rather a man of pleaſantry, who, in order to amuſe himſelf, tries to foment a poetical quarrel between Signor Zeno and me, for

the diverſion of being himſelf a ſpectator of our comedy. The parallel, which is the ſecond, but principal part of his letter, is manifeſtly written with that intention.

But in this particular, I do not find myſelf at all diſpoſed to gratify him. I feel the greateſt eſteem and reſpect for the worthy Signor Zeno; and I know that he returns my regard with equal friendſhip. Therefore aſſure every one who ſpeaks to you on the ſubject, that I ſay no leſs myſelf of our dear Apoſtolo, than the author of theſe conſiderations has written of him; and that, proud of having been thought a fit ſubject of ſuch a parallel, I moſt readily join on his ſide.

I know not whence the report that my Oratorio of *Gioas*, was in imminent danger of ſuppreſſion, could have ariſen. It was re-printed at Rome, and no one ever wrote me word, that there was any thing in it that gave offence; nor can I conceive what it could be, unleſs ſome paſſage had been tortured with malignity, into a ſenſe that was never intended by the writer: and in that caſe the Evangeliſts themſelves are not ſafe from hereſy. I ſee not the leaſt foundation for this report; and therefore cannot diſcover why you ſhould heſitate inſerting in

your edition of my works, one of the leaſt imperfect of my labours.

I never wrote a ſatire in my life, nor ever will write one. I deteſt this kind of compoſition, and am ſo ill furniſhed with the requiſite bile and malice for ſuch productions, that if I attempted them, they would never be read. You may therefore ſafely ſay, that whoever aſcribes any ſuch writings to me, is guilty of an atrocious falſehood.

In other reſpects, my ſtyle has its peculiar character, and intelligent readers will not be eaſily deceived.

If you have a mind to give my opinion of the reflections on *Demofoonte*, which you have ſent me, you may do it freely; but there will be an end of our friendſhip, if this letter, or a copy of it, ſhould ever be publiſhed in any manner whatever.

I know not what I have written in this haſty manner; and I have other cogent reaſons for not wiſhing to know.

I beg to have the original, or a copy, of this letter returned, as I have no time for tranſcription.

Vienna, July 23, 1734.

Our

Our Laureat's employments at the Imperial Court, for the Carnival of 1734, are recorded in his familiar letters to an intimate friend at Rome, who had ſent him an account of the theatrical preparations in that city, for the ſame Carnival.

LETTER VII.

TO SIGNOR GIUSEPPE PERONI.

In ſpite of the very moderate preparations for the performance of my two Operas at Rome, the mere mention of our theatres, brings inſtantly to view our waſpiſh and buſy little *Abate*, the contention of ſingers, the ardor of faction, the variety of opinions, and the univerſal buſtle of the ſeaſon. It makes me as reſtleſs as a Barbary-horſe, juſt going to ſtart, And if public circumſtances could give way to private, I ſhould certainly have obtained permiſſion this year to have breathed for a ſhort time paternal air, and to waſh off in the Tyber, the ruſt and impurities with which I am inſenſibly covered by the conſtant ſmoke of theſe ſtoves; but as that happineſs is at preſent impoſſible, I

muſt accommodate myſelf to the world, ſince the world will not accommodate itſelf to me. You are ſufficiently uſed to theatrical conflicts to remain a quiet ſpectator on ſuch occaſions. But I ſhould wiſh that Bulgarini, would keep away, leſt his zeal ſhould involve him in ſome diſagreeable ſituation, in caſe my Operas ſhould be unfortunate. But *à propos* to Roman news, I have received none by the laſt poſt, either from him or my brother; and am unable to account for the failure. It certainly is not the fault of the poſt, as I have had other letters from Rome. Knowing how conſtantly I inform them by every poſt of the ſtate of my health, their want of punctuality is the more ſtrange, as their trouble, by my own conſent, is alternate, and conſequently leſs than mine, who am alone. Remember, when you meet, to give them a fraternal remonſtrance in my name.

Vienna, Jan. 8, 1734.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

NOTWITHSTANDING the extreme late arrival of the poſt, which allows me no time for anſwering, I ſhall, at leaſt, by its return, acknowledge the receipt of your letter. You have made me laugh at the minute deſcription of our Brunette, and I fancied myſelf preſent.

I thank you for the circumſtantial account which you have ſent me, of the rehearſal of the *Olimpiade*, and you will afford me equal pleaſure by informing me truly of its reception, what ever it may be.

Yeſterday, I ſaw the Nina Caldara, fair as a jonquille, but not quite ſo freſh. She, as well as her moſt corpulent ſpouſe, ſend you ſalutation for ſalutation.

Vienna, Jan. 22, 1734.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

AT length I have time to write you a few lines. I have been ſo buſy, during the Carnival, as not to have a moment which I could call my own. Beſides my uſual occupations, I have been obliged, in the great-

eſt

eſt haſte, to write an entertainment, which their Moſt Serene Highneſſes the Archdutcheſſes have performed in muſic; and to inſtruct, direct, and aſſiſt them, which has ſolely abſorbed all my time.

But in truth, it is a pleaſure which no other can equal, to have ſuch an opportunity of ſeeing and admiring the excellent qualities of theſe auguſt Princeſſes. I ſhould not elſe have believed it poſſible to meet with ſuch attention, docility, patience, and gratitude. Oh, how many people, of the ſixteenth rank, have I known, who were not poſſeſſed of the thouſandth part of the courteſy of theſe incomparable perſonages! They have acted and ſung like angels, and it was truly ſacrilege, that the whole world was not permitted to admire them; for the feſtival was extremely private, as none but the Vienna ladies of the higheſt rank, were able to obtain admiſſion, and even theſe were in maſks. As a return for inſtructing their Serene Highneſſes, I was preſented with a gold ſnuff-box, of about fourſcore *Hungheri* (near 40l.) in weight, but the workmanſhip is of much more value *(f)*.

I have

(f) This little dramatic poem was called *Le Grazie Vendicate*, ſet by Caldara, and performed by the two Archdutcheſſes,

I have given you this account, from well knowing how much you intereſt yourſelf in what ever concerns me.

My pleaſure in the ſucceſs of *Demofoonte* at Rome, would have been more perfect, if it had not been imbittered by the diſgrace of poor *Ciampi* (*g*), who, however, conſidering how much ſentences of this kind depend upon fortune, ſhould be no more afflicted at the ill ſucceſs of his muſic, than I ought to be vain of the favourable reception of my poem. Theatrical matters are ſubject to ſo many accidents, that it would be an unpardonable temerity to pretend to guard againſt them all.

Vienna, Feb. 26, 1734.

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

THE pleaſure which you manifeſt at the great ſucceſs of my Demofoonte, pleaſes me no leſs than the circumſtance itſelf. I ſee clearly that you exult as ſincerely as if

dutcheſſes, Maria Tereſa, afterwards Empreſs Queen, and her ſiſter Marianna, with another Lady of the Court.

(*g*) This was not the *Ciampi* who came to England in 1748, but a more correct and maſterly compoſer. See *Hiſt. Muſ.* vol. iv. p. 538.

it

it were a production of your own; and the intereſt you take in my affairs is no leſs a proof of the ſincerity of your friendſhip, than the goodneſs of your heart. I return you my beſt thanks, and aſſure you of a reciprocal regard.

I am obliged to be ſhort, as well as yourſelf; not in revenge, but in imitation of your prudence, and for want of the too common abilities of knowing how to fill a letter with nothing.

Vienna, March 5, 1734.

The grand opera for the Emperor's birthday, this year, was *La Clemenza di Tito*, ſet by Caldara. This, as well as every preceding drama, written by Metaſtaſio, was ſoon brought on the ſtage in the principal cities of Italy; and was ſet by Leo, for Venice, in 1735.

It ſeems as if the character and court of the Emperor Charles VI. had directed the muſe of Metaſtaſio, to chuſe a virtuous prince for the principal hero of moſt of the muſical dramas that were repreſented in the Imperial Theatre. The Emperor was a religious Prince, and a rigid obſerver of decorum himſelf, which conſequently kept licentiouſneſs

neſs at a diſtance from his court. And the Poet, naturally a friend to virtue and morality, ſeems to have gratified his own feelings, by conforming to the ſerious ſentiments of his Imperial Patron.

In 1735, he produced the little opera called, *Le Cineſi*, for three characters only, by command of the Empreſs Elizabeth, as an introduction to a Chineſe *Balet*: it was afterwards performed, during the Carnival, in the apartments of the Imperial palace, to muſic by Reutter, by the two Archdutcheſſes, Maria-Tereſa, and Marianna, with a lady of the court (*b*).

Il Palladio conſervato was ſet by Reutter, for the Empreſs Elizabeth's birth-day, and performed by the two Archdutcheſſes.

Il Sogno di Scipione, written for the fortunate campaign of the Auſtrians in Italy, was ſet by *Prediere*, and performed in the Imperial palace, for the birth-day of the Emperor Charles VI. by order of the Empreſs Elizabeth.

(*b*) This little Drama was revived in 1753, at the caſtle of the Prince of SAXEN HILBURGHAUSEN, by profeſſed muſicians, for the entertainment of the Emperor FRANCIS I. and the Empreſs MARIA-TERESA, with an additional character.

The

The pieces written for the celebration of the birth-days of the Emperor and Empreſs, were a ſpecies of birth-day odes, but always in a dramatic form, in which the praiſe was delicately diſguiſed, in a fable or allegory.

Our author was ſtill in correſpondence with the printer Betinelli, who had been ſo ſucceſsful in publiſhing his works, that he became importunate in his ſolicitations for every new production that came from his pen. And hearing of a new opera for the Emperor's birth-day this year, he preſſed him for a copy, to add to his other works that were printed at Venice. To this laſt requeſt Metaſtaſio wrote the following anſwer.

LETTER XI.

TO SIGNOR RETINILLI.

THOUGH I am convinced that you do me great honour, whenever you are pleaſed to aſk for any of my compoſitions, yet ſo numerous are the ſolicitations which I receive, on every occaſion of a new production, that being wholly unable to ſatisfy them all, I find it moſt expedient to comply with none. As it is ſo inconvenient to be at my eaſe

and

and gain no friends, than to make enemies by trouble and fatigue. My dear Betinelli is ſo reaſonable, that he will not, I hope, diſpute the rectitude, or at leaſt, the convenience, of my ſentence; and, conſequently, will not think I act injudiciouſly, if I do not furniſh him with the drama he deſires.

Of the pieces which I have written this year, none will be publiſhed ſo ſoon as we thought. That which I have juſt finiſhed, will not be acted before St. Charles's day (the 4th of Nov.) as the court is lately gone into mourning for the Prince of *Bevern*, couſin to the preſent Empreſs; ſo that I can ſay nothing poſitive on the ſubject.

Vienna, Oct. 1, 1735.

The opera to which he alludes, was *Themiſtocles*, which, though ſet by Caldara, and ready for repreſentation, was not exhibited till the Carnival of 1736. But while this was performing, Metaſtaſio had another taſk aſſigned him, the difficulties of which he frequently related to his friends, many years after.

In writing to Betinelli during this time, he ſays: " I ſend to you, my ever obliging friend, a copy of the opera *(Achille in Sciro)*

which I have been obliged to write for the nuptials of her moſt ſerene Highneſs, the Archdutcheſs Tereſa, in eighteen days and a half. Three months, which I uſed to allow myſelf for writing an opera, were never ſufficient to finiſh it to my mind; imagine whether it was poſſible to ſatisfy myſelf with this."

To his friend Perroni, he ſends a more minute account of this precipitate drama.

"I ſhall not give you a detail of the celebration of the auguſt nuptials here, lately, as they are deſcribed in all the letters and news-papers of the time. I ſhall only ſay, that I never was ſo embarraſſed in my life, as on this occaſion. I was commanded to write an opera in eighteen days and a half: a ſhort ſpace of time indeed; for I never allowed myſelf leſs than three months for the ſame kind of work; and I ſtill tremble at the taſk, even though it is performed; however, it has anſwered the purpoſe; and my moſt auguſt Maſter, as well as the new married couple, and all the court, allowing perhaps for the riſk I ran by ſuch precipitation, have ſhewn as much favour to this ſpecies of abortion, as if it had been a regular birth. His Serene Highneſs the Duke of Lorrain,

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in teſtimony of approbation, has preſented me with a ring, formed of one brilliant, worth four or five hundred *Ungheri*, according to the opinion of the learned in ſuch matters. This is a great mark of diſtinction, not only as it exceeds my merit, but becauſe none of my predeceſſors ever received any particular gratification on ſimilar occaſions (*i*).

The admirable opera of *Ciro Riconoſcouto*, was a production of this period, and likewiſe ſet by Caldara.

It ſeems as if 1737 had been a ſabatical year, for our author and his muſe; for none of his poetical works bear that date, nor do any of his letters, of that period, appear in the collection.

In 1738 he produced *La pace fra la Virtù, e la Bellezza*, a theatrical piece of one act, ſet by *Prediere*, for the name-day of the Archdutcheſs Maria Tereſa, afterwards Empreſs Queen; and *Il Parnaſo accuſato, e diſeſo*, which was ſet by *Reutter*, and performed by the two Archdutcheſſes. Theſe

(*i*) The Poet related to the author of theſe memoirs, at Vienna, in 1772, his diſtreſs, and the manner in which he extricated himſelf on this occaſion. See *Preſent State of Muſic in Germany*, &c. vol. i. Art. Vienna.

and many other occaſional dramas, though elegantly written, have not been of that general uſe in other parts of Europe, which fell to the lot of moſt of his operas, for want of more length and characters. The fame of our author having, however, by this time, been extended to every part of the globe, where the Italian language and poetry were underſtood, could not fail penetrating to the city of *Aſſiſi*; the birth-place of his father. And we find among the letters of Metaſtaſio, written this year, the two following, which will explain themſelves.

LETTER XII.

TO THE MAGISTRATES OF ASSISI.

I SHALL not undertake to expreſs to you, my illuſtrious countrymen (*k*), the effect which your moſt flattering letter has had on my heart, in which you have been pleaſed to inform me that I have been admitted to the

(*k*) Metaſtaſio, though born at Rome, calls the inhabitants of Aſſiſi his countrymen; not only, perhaps, from its being the birth-place of his anceſtors, but likewiſe, a city belonging to the Roman State.

rank

rank of nobility among your citizens. The intrinſic value of ſo precious a gift, the unſolicited liberality with which it has been beſtowed, the public attention in notifying it, the aſſurance of my being unanimouſly honoured with your approbation, are ſuch motives of ſatisfaction, gratitude, ſenſibility, and, let me add, of ſhame for my unworthineſs, as have impreſſed me with emotions that are utterly out of my power to deſcribe. Would to heaven my merit may ever be ſuch as ſhall ſufficiently apologiſe to poſterity for your partiality! It will, at leaſt, be an honourable and powerful ſtimulus to that deſire of fame, which I have hitherto cheriſhed; and render me doubly ambitious, that the memory of my gratitude may not be extinguiſhed, even with my life.

Vienna, Nov. 22, 1738.

LETTER XIII.

TO SIG. ANGELINI DI ASSISI.

The aggregation among the noble citizens of Aſſiſi, which was conferred on me the 15th of October laſt, has overpowed me with confuſion, at ſo unexpected and im-

portant an honour; to which my ambition, having no foundation in hope, had never ſuffered me to aſpire. The obliging eagerneſs and zeal with which you have been pleaſed to congratulate me on this occaſion, ſufficiently manifeſt the active part you have had in procuring me this moſt valuable acquiſition. I beg you will explain to all thoſe moſt worthy counſellors, beginning with yourſelf, and to all who have approved of the meaſure, what a high ſenſe I have of the honour that has been done me. Deſcribe to them, in the moſt reſpectful expreſſions, my grateful ſenſe of their condeſcenſion, and aſſure them, ſeverally, that no leſs jealous than proud of ſo great a diſtinction, it will always be my ambition not to diſgrace ſo illuſtrious a body, to whom I have already forwarded my public acknowledgments. I entreat you, Sir, to continue to me your moſt valued friendſhip and patronage, and to afford me frequent occaſions of manifeſting with what regard and eſteem I have the honour to be, &c.

Vienna, Nov. 28, 1738.

It does not appear that our author produced any other drama in 1739, than *Aſtrea*

trèa Placata, of one act only, ſet by Prediere, for the Empreſs Elizabeth's birth-day. He did not, however, ſuffer his muſe to remain idle: as it appears by his poſthumous works, that he tranſlated the III. ſatire of Juvenal. Boileau did the ſame in 1660, and Dr. Johnſon in 1738.

" Three Poets in three diſtant regions born,
" France, Italy, and England did adorn."

Metaſtaſio, like our Dryden, tranſlated cloſely; pointing, like the original author, all the ſatire againſt the city of Rome; but Boileau applied it to Paris; and Johnſon to LONDON. Metaſtaſio, the ſame year, tranſlated the VI. ſatire of Horace; not in *verſi ſciolti*, or blank verſe, which he had made uſe of for Juvenal; but in *Terza Rima*, the meaſure of Dante.

Few of his letters of this year are preſerved, except that to his father, which has been already inſerted, and one to Betinelli, of no great conſequence.

In 1740, however, he was leſs inactive, or his dramatic muſe more propitious. For beſides the opera of *Zenobia*, which was ſet by Caldara; and the oratorio of *Iſacco*, by Prediere, he wrote *Il natal di*

Giove, a drama of one act, ſet by Bonno (*l*), and a canzonet for a dance of Ruſtics, which was performed in the Imperial court, to muſic of Bonno, the laſt Sunday in the Carnival of this year, by their Royal Highneſſes the two Archdutcheſſes of Auſtria, Mary Tereſa, and Marianne, and the ladies of their court. He likewiſe wrote, this year, the opera of *Attilio Regolo* for the birth-day of the Emperor Charles VI.; but that Prince dying before it had been repreſented, it was laid aſide, and not performed, till 1750, when it was ſet by Haſſe, for the court of Dreſden.

Our author laments the the death of his Imperial Patron, with great ſenſibility, in

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LETTER XIV.

TO A FRIEND.

YESTERDAY, at half an hour paſt one o'clock, my moſt Auguſt Maſter, Charles VI. breathed his laſt. I need ſay no more, to convince you of my extreme affliction.

(*l*) Of this compoſer we ſhall have further occaſion to ſpeak hereafter.

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The laſt days of his preeious life have made us know the weight of our misfortune, as there was not a moment in which he did not give teſtimonies of his piety, fortitude, and affection, for his people. He fulfilled to the laſt moment, the part of a Prince and a Hero. My tears, which have never been more juſtly ſhed, prevent me from lengthening this letter. I am ſo oppreſſed with the view of this public calamity, that, as yet, I am unable to examine the circumſtances of my own. His illneſs, which was an inflamation in his ſtomach, but ill underſtood by his phyſicians, laſted ſeven days and ſome hours. I beg of you to implore the Supreme Being to grant me that firmneſs, which, at preſent, I ſo deplorably want (*m*).

Before this event happened, Metaſtaſio wrote to Betinelli in a more gay humour.

(*m*) There is no date to this letter: it may therefore be neceſſary to remind the reader, that the Emperor Charles VI. father of the late Empreſs Queen, was born in 1685, declared King of Spain by his father in 1703, crowned Emperor of Germany 1711, and died in October, 1740.

LETTER XV.

You forget me, my dear Bettinelli; and I, in revenge, am determined to remember you. In my laſt letter, I ſent you a ſmall bill of exchange, deſiring you to give me advice of its ſafe arrival, and to tell me whether the printing the works of Guarini goes on, as I am a ſubſcriber. But you have done neither one nor the other; and yet I ſend you my *Iſaac*, which was ſung laſt Tueſday in the Imperial Chapel. I hope to diſturb your ſleep, and to deſerve to be favoured, in return, with your commands.

Vienna, April 15, 1740.

But in the beginning of the next year, he wrote to him in a very different diſpoſition.

LETTER XVI.

Your pathetic and obliging letter, my dear Betinelli, is an ingenious reproach for my ſilence. I confeſs to you, that unleſs driven to it by neceſſity, it is with great difficulty that I can bring myſelf to uſe the pen. An employment which, though uſeful

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in civil life, I can follow at preſent to little purpoſe. There was no myſtery in my ſilence. My melancholy inaction has deprived me of the means of ſending you, as uſual, my new productions. The loſs of my Patron has made me almoſt forget myſelf, as well as others. The completion of the new edition of Greek and Roman Claſſics, has broke the only thread by which our correſpondence was held together; and yet you wonder that I have ceaſed to write? However, I thank you for complaining, which I regard as a teſtimony of your friendſhip; and I aſſure you, that I am not in the leaſt changed with reſpect to my eſteem for you; and I promiſe to give you proofs of it, whenever opportunity offers. In order that this letter may not be wholly without ſome little matter of buſineſs, I beg that you will ſend me, by the firſt opportunity, a copy of the additions to my works which you have printed; in which are contained *Aſtrea Placata*, and *Il Sogno di Scipione*. At the ſame time, inform me of the price, and believe me to be invariably yours.

Vienna, March 18, 1741.

END OF THE FOURTH SECTION.

SECTION V.

THE deceaſe of Metaſtaſio's Imperial Patron Charles VI. which was occaſioned by the poiſon, or indigeſtion, of muſhrooms, at the age of fifty-five, proved a calamity to all Europe, by the general war which immediately followed. This Prince, the fifth ſon of the Emperor Leopold, had ſucceeded his brother, the Emperor Joſeph, in 1711; and dying without male iſſue, his eldeſt daughter, Maria Tereſa, ſucceeded him, as Queen of Hungary and Bohemia; but her conſort, the Duke of Lorrain, and afterwards, Grand Duke of Tuſcany, was at this time an unſucceſsful candidate for the Empire, which was obtained by the French arms and intrigues, for the Duke of Bavaria, by the name of Charles VII. His predeceſſor had not been dead two months, before the King of Pruſſia invaded Sileſia. In January 1741, Charles VII. was elected Emperor. At the ſame time, the Queen of Hungary was obliged to quit Vienna, which was threatened with a ſiege, and throw herſelf into the

arms

arms of her hereditary ſubjects at Preſburg. This war continuing in Germany, and the reſt of Europe, with various ſucceſs, till the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, afforded the Royal Miſtreſs of Metaſtaſio and her court, little opportunity, or appetite, for being amuſed by the peaceful arts of poetry and muſic.

Upon the death of the Emperor Charles VII. after a moſt turbulent and unhappy reign of four years, her Conſort the Grand Duke of Tuſcany, was elected Emperor, in 1745, by the title of Francis the Firſt; but the war ſtill continuing, the Imperial Laureate was ſeldom called upon to exerciſe his talents.

The only proof remaining of his commerce with the Muſes in 1741, is *L'Amor Prigioniero*, a little drama ſet by Reutter, for a private performance at court, conſiſting only of two characters, and one ſcene. For the year 1742, there is a total blank. And in 1743, he ſeems only to have produced *Il vero omaggio*, a ſhort poetical dialogue ſet to muſic by Bonno, and ſung on the birth-day of the Arch-duke Joſeph, the late Emperor.

However, fortune became now ſomewhat leſs adverſe to the Auſtrians, than the two

ceding years, and according to Metaſtaſio's Vienna was not without its amuſements during the Carnival.

LETTER I.

TO THE MARQUIS CHARLES CAVALLI, di RAVENNA.

How can I ſufficiently thank you, my dear Marquis, for the matchleſs kindneſs with which you have been pleaſed to honour me, in a teſtimony of your remembrance, ſo unexpected, yet ardently deſired? Indeed there was occaſion for a medicine no leſs efficacious, to alleviate my affliction at the diſtance between us. I am extremely pleaſed to hear that you have found in Ravenna ſuch a conſiderable number of true lovers of literature. The commerce with ſuch people, muſt furniſh you with agreeable amuſement; and your cultivated and happy talents will be in no want of a ſtimulus or a theatre.

Here every one is immerſed in the pleaſures of the Carnival. The Plays, Games, Balls, Ridottos, and Maquerades, are innumerable; and though, from my natural diſ-

poſition,

poſition, ſituation, and circumſtances, I am unable to partake of them, I nevertheleſs rejoice in the joy of others. Divert yourſelf in our charming Italy, and in ſome intervals of your happineſs, remember that I am with the moſt ſincere and reſpectful eſteem, &c.

Vienna, Jan. 5, 1743.

In 1744, we find two Operas, and one little Drama of his writing, but very few letters. The Operas were IPERMESTRA, written by command, and ſet by Haſſe, for Vienna (*n*), and ANTIGONO, written for the Court of Dreſden, and likewiſe ſet by Haſſe. It is the only drama which he ſeems to have produced for any other theatre than that of Vienna, ſince his appointment to the Imperial Laureatſhip. *Ipermeſtra* was ſet the ſame year by Bertoni for Venice, at a very early period of his life. The beautiful little Drama, entitled *La Danza*, conſiſting only of one ſcene, ſet by Bonno, was performed

(*n*) The Poet himſelf told me, that IPERMESTRA was written upon very ſhort notice, to be performed, at firſt, in private, at Court, by great Perſonages; but, it was ſoon after publicly repreſented by profeſſed Muſicians, in celebration of the Nuptials of an Archdutcheſs, with Prince Charles of Lorrain. See above, p. 115. and *Germ. Tour.* Art. Vienna.

by a gentleman and lady, of the Court of Vienna. Two letters to his father, and one to the Abate Paſquini, at that time the Italian dramatic Poet in the ſervice of the Court of Dreſden, are all the letters of this year that have been preſerved.

The Abate Paſquini, had been recommended to the Court of Dreſden, by Metaſtaſio; who appears, by the letters, which he addreſſed to this Poet, to have intereſted himſelf much in his ſucceſs. The correſpondence continued to the time of Paſquini's death, in 1763. The following is the firſt letter to him, that has been preſerved.

LETTER II.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI, in DRESDEN.

AND is the tender conſcience of my dear Abate Paſquini, at length touched! If this had happened towards Eaſter, I ſhould have had a penitential ſermon, to have thanked you for; but arriving in all the fervor and gaiety of the Carnival, it is truly an exquiſite morſel, ſo much the more delicious, as it was wholly unexpected. But to have done with

with my fooleries, I beg of you, ſeriouſly, not to imagine that I was ſo unreaſonable, as to think our friendſhip affected, in the leaſt, by your long and obſtinate ſilence. I know your hurry and impetuoſity, and have a thouſand times forgot the tempeſt of my own affairs, in thinking of thoſe in which my friend was involved. But your preſent tranquillity may compenſate for all your former agitation. It affords me the moſt heart-felt pleaſure, and I ſincerely aſſure you, that few events could happen which could give me equal delight. Your zealous aſſiſtance to my poor *Antigono*, has infinitely more obliged than ſurpriſed me. I expected no leſs from the goodneſs of your heart, the probity of which I am proud of having always had diſcernment ſufficient to diſtinguiſh, through thoſe little vapours from the trembling fountain, which have ſometimes made you doubt of my friendſhip. When you begin again to touch the Lyre, I beg you will not forget me. But you muſt not think me ſuch a precious coxcomb, as to accept the poetical ſupremacy to which your friendſhip would wiſh to elect me.

It is your generoſity that has made me the hero of one of your diſcourſes, of which

the fruit is common to both; and I know better than you, that your happy talents are equal to any flight, if not repreſſed from time to time, by the little confidence you have in your own powers: an infirmity, however, for which I vainly ſeek a remedy myſelf.

Oh, how much I envy you the company of Signor Haſſe, and Signora Fauſtina, his conſort! they are truly an exquiſite couple; embrace them both for me, and aſſure them, that they cannot beſtow on me a more tender affection, than that which I have conceived for them. But in executing this commiſſion, do not forget how much I love, eſteem, and ſincerely wiſh to ſerve you.

Vienna, Feb. 15, 1744.

Our author's poetical productions in 1746, conſiſt only of his two beautiful *Canzonette*, LA PARTENZA, and LA PALINODIA A NICE, thirteen years after he had ſo piouſly and elegantly thanked the gods for diſcovering to him her infidelities, in his *Grazie agl' inganni tuoi*.

No letter of 1745, or of 1746, ſeems to have been preſerved, except the following.

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LETTER III.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI, SECRETARY OF THE UNIVESITY OF TURIN.

NOTHING leſs than the powerful efficacy of my moſt reſpected friend, the Marquis of Ormea, was neceſſary to obtain for me an excellent and long wiſhed-for letter from the ungrateful, forgetful, inhuman, and yet, notwithſtanding all that, the moſt amiable Signor Filipponi. I have neglected no occaſion of reminding him of our friendſhip; I even had recourſe to the friars, in order to procure a reciprocal return; but all in vain. I muſt confeſs, that, ſometimes, tranſported by mingled anger and affection, I have hardly been able to refrain from breaking with him, and calling him by the injurious names of Anthropophagus, Troglodite, Leſtrigon, and Pandour. Nor do I know to what exceſs I ſhould at length have been tranſported, if your letter had not opportunely arrived, to appeaſe my irraſcibility.

But it has not only appeaſed, it has awakened in my mind, a croud of delightful me-

mentos of laughable adventures, at ſchool, in our walks, chats, diſputes, and feſtivities; the *Vomero*, *chiaja*, *Giulia Street*, *Porto del popolo*, and innumerable other places. It has penetrated the moſt hidden, and feeling parts of my heart, and rekindled the very ancient flame of tender friendſhip. But as there is no ſweet, in this life, unmixed with bitter, ſo the unfamiliar and formal ſtyle with which you addreſs me, in the third perſon, as if the dignity of ſecretary of a royal univerſity, or of Imperial Laureate, could prevail over that of friendſhip, has deprived me of no ſmall portion of the pleaſure which your letter would otherwiſe have given me. I hope you ſincerely repent of this at your heart, and have made a vow never again to be guilty of ſuch ſacrilege; and taking this for granted, for this once I forgive you.

I have no doubt of the intereſt which you take in the honourable circumſtances of fortune, to which, according to my moderate expectations, I have found no difficulty in limiting my deſires; and am grateful for it, as well as for the reputation to which the number of my friends has more contributed, than the weight of my merit. And aſſure yourſelf, that I am equally delighted with

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the juſtice that has been rendered to you, by ſo enlightened, glorious, and univerſally admired a Prince, as the ſovereign into whoſe ſervice you have been received. A fate the more enviable, as every day convinces us more and more, that Prophets are ſeldom honoured in their own country.

It is moſt certain, that I ardently wiſh to make an excurſion to Turin, when the public tranquillity for which we ſo much ſigh, and my moſt auguſt Princes, will permit; chiefly to have it to boaſt, that I have ſeen and venerated a Monarch, who by the unanimous conſent of all Europe, has combined the qualities of King, Soldier, Citizen, and Father; and I ſhall certainly do it ſometime or other, and avail myſelf of your moſt obliging offers, of which I have a due ſenſe, as well as of thoſe of our moſt worthy Marquis of Ormea, to whom I hold myſelf previouſly engaged. Beſides the qualities of heart and mind, in which nature has been prodigal to this noble friend, and the many others for which he is indebted to education and experience, there are public titles which have no leſs claims to my reſpect and affection, than to the univerſal eſteem and love which he has acquired in this Court. It is

impoſſible for me to explain all the private obligations for which he is intitled to my reverence and gratitude. Hence I hope you will not exact from me a compliance, which would render me leſs worthy of your friendſhip.

But my letter is already of a length ſufficient to puniſh you for your long ſilence: I begin to have compaſſion upon you; and ſo, not to wear you out entirely, as, on account of your being a married man it might prejudice a third perſon, I embrace you tenderly; and beg of you to preſerve your health for my ſake, and to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, March 5, 1746.

This correſpondence continued, with great affection till 1775.

In 1747, were written the three following letters.

LETTER IV.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

It is ſometime ſince I began to make uſe of the recipe which you were ſo kind as to commu-

communicate to me in your letter of the 21ſt of January; though, hitherto, with little ſucceſs. I have therefore diſcontinued taking it for a ſhort time, to avoid being thought capricious, obſtinate, and a diſgrace to the whole venerable faculty of medicine, as well as to myſelf. Hence the preſcription furniſhes me with more gratitude than hope. If you ſhould have a ſmall portion of patience to ſpare, pray communicate it to me, as that is the ſole pharmacy I want to enable me to ſupport expectation from time, which is ſo alert an enemy, and ſo ſlow a benefactor.

You exult at our ſituation in Italy, and I perhaps from an hypocondriac habit, can neither think of it with joy nor tranquillity. I ſee no cauſe for triumph at Genoa nor on the Var. Neither am I convinced that we have nothing to fear in Provence and Naples; I know not what we can hope from maritime aſſiſtance; nor do I know what to wiſh, as to the limitations or extenſion of our enterpriſe. In ſhort, I know ſo little, that in this abyſs of ignorance, I have reſolved to be carried down into the hold of this moſt agitated bark, of which I am on board; and when the ſtorm is over, if it ſhould pleaſe

God to put an end to it during my life, I ſhall raiſe my head, and cry out, *where are we?*

I thank you for the partial judgment which you have paſſed on my *Antigono*, and *Ipermeſtra*. I was obliged to write the latter in eighteen days, by a royal command; ſo that I had hardly time ſufficient allowed me for tranſcribing it. As to the cantata, which begins with *Giuſti Dei Che ſara*, it has no other meaning, than the words naturally imply, on firſt reading: which ſay; that the praiſes of our Auguſt Princeſs are too great a ſubject for me; that having been too daring in attempting it, heaven has puniſhed my preſumption, by rendering my lyre diſobedient to my will, and that I ſee my error and ſue for pardon. I ſhould be glad to know what theſe words could poſſibly mean, if not this. But what a difficult taſk it is to compoſe verſes many times every year on a Princeſs, who, though ſhe merits ſuch high praiſe, will not hear it?

I ſhall receive, with the utmoſt pleaſure, at your convenience, the two tragedies which you ſay you have written; and have no doubt of their merit, from the long commerce which you have conſtantly had with the muſes and their favourites.

I beg

I beg my reſpects to your ſurfeited prieſteſs, to whom I ſend my wiſhes in blank, ſince my former were ſo unſucceſsful. Your moſt worthy count Canale thanks and ſalutes you; and, embracing you tenderly, I am as uſual.

Vienna, Feb. 18, 1747.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

I CONGRATULATE you, in the firſt place, on the magnificent and couragious ſentiments, with which your moſt agreeable letter of the 18th of March is filled. I admire your ſovereign contempt of the enemy; your paternal confidence in our allies enchants me; your high reſpect for our forces and councils gives me conſolation; and, in ſhort, I envy and admire that firm and intrepid tranquillity of mind, which I did not think ſubſiſted on earth; but which I find reſides thus undiſturbed in the ſerene breaſt of my dear Filipponi. May God increaſe and fortify theſe gifts, and grant ſome little portion of their influence to my feeble and diminutive

ſoul,

ſoul, which, remembering the paſt, and diſſatisfied with the preſent, is unable to imagine any thing good for the future. To our Marquis Ormea, bold and animated thoughts of right belong; they are the patrimony of his military profeſſion, which he exerciſes with ſo much honour; but to me, born and bred, in a manner under the petticoats of the poor puſilanimous muſes, who are indeed no better than little weak women, doubts are more natural; and ſome, who only examine the outſide of things, call this prudence, while others term it timidity.

The Marquis of Ormea and Count Brown, as well as yourſelf, do the author of the little fable of the *Ballerina* too much honour, by your contempt. How is it poſſible to eſcape the fooliſh loquacity of impertinent people? Perhaps ſome *equivoque* has given birth to this nonſenſe, without any evil intention; and to the uſual credulity and rage for exaggeration and the wonderful, all the attention which the public has beſtowed upon it may be imputed. But whatever opinion the world may have of it, pray let it circulate in peace and quiet; for when we arrive at a certain age, the wild ſtories of our youthful vigour do not diſpleaſe us, though apocryphal.

I have

I have juſt received letters from Rome and Naples, with interrogations concerning the romance of *La Ballerina*. And I begin myſelf to be curious to know whence this fable, without head or tail, or even the leaſt foundation, could poſſibly have its origin.

Vienna, April 22, 1747.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

As it is impoſſible to reconcile your courage with my cowardice, concerning political preſages, I ſhall follow the advice given in your laſt, and freight my letters with other merchandize. Not, however, without ſome inward malignity of ſelf-complacence, for having communicated to you a little of my own vice of deſpondency, inſtead of contracting, myſelf, ſome tincture of your fortitude. At leaſt (but I do not expect you to confeſs it) your being the firſt to relinquiſh your opinion, does not flatter my vanity a little. But let us not triumph in matters concerning which we ſhould be glad to be

vanquiſhed.—My *Attilio Regolo* ſleeps; and I cannot prevail on myſelf, in the preſent languid ſtate of my health, to ſet about making the ſmall additions to the laſt ſcene, which are ſtill wanting, without being forced to it. If my health is better next year, I ſhall think of it.

Vienna, June 14, 1747.

LETTER VII.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

If your letter of the 4th inſtant had been delivered to me without date, without ſignature, and written in a ſtrange hand, I ſhould ſtill inſtantly have recognized in it my dear Paſquini. That impetuoſity, indignation, force of expreſſion, and contempt, are unequivocal traits of character. And is it poſſible, after ſo many years of public concubinage with the muſes, you ſhould be ſurpriſed to find, that it is the fate of all works of genius, to be expoſed to capricious cenſure, without examination? Do you not know, that every one is proud of his own ſagacity, though obliged to confeſs that he has no ſcience?

Can

Can you forget what has been ſaid of Homer and Virgil? Are the Pamphili and Mævii of Horace out of your memory? Does not what happened in the Roman theatre, to Lælius and Scipio, conſole you? Does the abuſe of Taſſo, by the barbers of Florence, appear trifling to you? Have not you aſſerted to me a thouſand times, notwithſtanding all I could ſay to you, that on certain occaſions you have exhauſted all your impatient friendſhip, in tranſports of true Paſquinian paſſion in my defence? What new ideas then have entered your head? Would you be the only one of all the poetical family in whom there ſhould be no cauſe for ridicule? That would be too proud. Do you wiſh never to be the ſubject of converſation? That would be too modeſt, and but ill underſtanding your own intereſt. The correſpondence between authors and the public, is like that of lovers, among whom the moſt fatal ſymptom is not anger, but neglect. For my own part, after long experience, I have found no better method of treating critics, than *to profit by their remarks, if good, and laugh at them, if bad: and always aſpiring at perfection, to let the reſt rail till they are tired.*

I do

I do not mean to propoſe myſelf as a model, but the recipe has been ſucceſsfully tried. Appeaſe therefore theſe tumults, I entreat you: let the mind recover its true tone, and let us ſpeak of the *Generoſa Spartana*. I am proud of the gift, no leſs for its own merit, than as a teſtimony of your remembrance. I have already twice peruſed it with attention. And now, with your good leave, I ſhall give you my ſincere opinion of it.

I find the verſe round and flowing; the ſtyle as ornate, and poetical, as belongs to dramatic compoſition; and the places very few in which the bow ſeems ſomewhat relaxed, and where I ſhould have wiſhed for more ſtrength. But for this we have a paſſage in Horace, *verum opere longo fas eſt obrepere ſomnum*. There is a ſufficient number of fine thoughts, and ſolid ſentiments, without pedantry, no leſs acutely conceived, than luminouſly produced. The airs are all harmonious and happy. In ſhort, repeating what I have told you a thouſand times, I do not find many at, preſent, who, in this poetical faculty, pleaſe me more than yourſelf. But, after long uſe, you are certainly not ignorant how faſtidious and difficult I am become;

become; hence it will not appear ſtrange, if I preſerve my character with a friend who wiſhes me to be ſincere.

I therefore confeſs to you, freely, that I ſhould have wiſhed more deſign throughout your opera. Or, to explain myſelf more clearly, that the principles and paſſions you propoſed to introduce, were better eſtabliſhed. The audience cannot intereſt themſelves, as you would wiſh, in the agitations of your perſonages, becauſe there is not ſufficient time allowed to render them either hateful or amiable. If the mind of a ſpectator is removed from its uſual temperament and tranquillity, the intereſt does not continue long enough to be remembered in the next ſcene: ſo that it becomes torpid and unwilling to be pleaſed, even to that degere of nauſea which ſoon comes on for thoſe very beauties, which, otherwiſe, might ſucceſsfully have ſolicited and ſeduced. And thoſe who are not initiated in the myſteries of poetry, feeling themſelves tired, without knowing the cauſe, frequently lay the blame on what is worthy of praiſe; exactly as a ſick child unable to point out the ſuffering part whence its pain had its beginning, either miſtakes one place for another, or complains of all alike.

This

This is my opinion, yet not given as a law—but who will dare decide poſitively in theſe matters?

Deſire the critics themſelves to name you a perfect Archetype. I know not how to ſuggeſt any one to you, except that of my friendſhip, of which I have given you no ſlight ſpecimen, in the dangerous ſincerity with which I have now ventured to write you my ſentiments.

Receive it kindly; return it: love me, and believe that I am, &c.

Vienna, July 22, 1747.

This letter may ſerve as a ſpecimen of the urbanity, yet frankneſs, with which he played the critic, in examining the works of his moſt intimate friends. This correſpondence with Paſquini, the Dreſden Laureate, will be reſumed, occaſionally, in chronological order.

END OF THE FIFTH SECTION.

SECTION

SECTION VI.

WE are now arrived at a very intereſting period in the correſpondence of Metaſtaſio, to the lovers of poetry and muſic, when a conſtant literary intercourſe with the celebrated FARINELLI began, which continued to the end of both their lives. Farinelli's wonderful profeſſional abilities have been ſo amply celebrated lately, that nothing need be ſaid in addition to former accounts (*o*). But the permanence of friendſhip between him and Metaſtaſio, which continued fifty years after they were ſeparated, and eſtabliſhed in the ſervice of different Monarchs, in the two moſt remote capitals of Europe, deſerves ſome record.

It has already been mentioned in theſe Memoirs, that the poet and muſician were nearly of the ſame age, and began their public career in the city of Naples, at the

(*o*) *Ital. Tour*, and *Hiſt. Muſ.* vol. iv.

ſame period of time: Farinelli having performed there in the Serenata of *Angelica*, written by Metaſtaſio in 1723, and in his opera of *Didone*, in 1724.

The ſucceſs with which their ſeveral talents were crowned in theſe early efforts, and a happy coincidence of temper and diſpoſition, which each found in the other, of thoſe virtues and qualities which he moſt loved, admired, and practiſed, through life, cemented affection and rivetted their hearts, beyond the power of time or accident to ſever.

It will appear through the whole correſpondence which has been preſerved, that they regarded each other as *Twins* of public favour, brought to light at the ſame *birth*, and united in one common intereſt. Metaſtaſio never envied the applauſe of the ſinger, nor imagined his poetry injured by his too florid ſtyle of ſinging, though the fame of Farinelli ſeems to have been built more upon the extraordinary compaſs of his voice, and powers of execution, than upon his fine acting or tender expreſſion. And ſuch was his fraternal affection and partiality for his *Caro Gemello*, that he afterwards appears ſo entirely to have overlooked or forgotten the want of ſimplicity, action, and pathos in his ſinging,

as

as ſeverely to cenſure younger performers, for theſe defects, in his letters to Farinelli himſelf.

Muſical readers need not be reminded, that Farinelli, after ſinging with unrivalled applauſe in the principal lyric theatres of Europe, came into England in the year 1733; and after performing there four ſucceſſive ſeaſons, and engaging for a fifth, was invited to Spain in 1737, when his voice having been found to have the ſame effect on the diſorder of the Spaniſh Monarch, Philip V. as the harp of David upon the evil ſpirit of King Saul, he was retained in the ſervice of that court, and a penſion ſettled on him for life, of £. 3000 ſterling a year, upon condition that he never ſung again on a public ſtage. And in order to elevate him to a rank worthy of attending a ſovereign in his private hours, he was honoured with the orders of St. Jago and Calatrava. In 1746 his royal patron Philip V. died; but his court favour continued under that monarch's ſucceſſor with equal ſplendor. The firſt letter to Farinelli which has been inſerted in the literary correſpondence of Metaſtaſio, is in anſwer to one from that celebrated ſinger, of July 2d,

1747, about a year after the new monarch of Spain had aſcended the throne.

LETTER I.

TO THE CAVALIERE CARLO BROSCHI DETTO FARINELLI.

Your moſt agreeable, but ſhort, letter, concerning my inſatiable thirſt for talking with you in the beſt manner which ſuch an enormous diſtance will admit, was long enough to convince me of the place I hold in your heart: for without that circumſtance, you certainly would not have ſacrificed even ſo much time and labour. The convenience, civility, politeneſs, and the other common ties of ſociety, are not uſed to inſpire ſuch patience. This proof therefore of tender friendſhip, added to ancient teſtimonies and new proteſtations, render me ſo ſecure of it, that I ſhould have doubted of any thing ſooner than of your affection. This alone would have been ſufficient to make me love you, in return; you know by long experience, *che amore à nullo amar perdona* (*p*). Now your

(*p*) That love allows nothing beloved to love another.

merit,

merit, which has rendered you as amiable as ſingular, is an accumulation of powerful effects.

The confidence with which you ſpeak to me of your affairs; the cordiality of your offer to redreſs mine; the tender anxiety which you manifeſt for my health; the inſtruction and expedients which you ſuggeſt; the deſcriptions of my misfortunes, and the protection which you procure me from thoſe illuſtrious nymphs *:—in ſhort, your generous idea is ſo much to my palate, as greatly encourages hope: unite then all theſe circumſtances, and tell me who is the arithmetician that is able to enumerate the product. I can expreſs myſelf no better than by telling you, that I love you as Farinelli deſerves to be loved.

It is impoſſible for the deſcription which you have ſent me of your malady, and being let blood, as well as of the French ſurgeon, and Lombardo the phyſician, to be more lively, and full of wit. I have often laughed at the humour with which you have ſeaſoned a narration, tragic in itſelf: Would to heaven the ardent wiſhes of all perſons of taſte

* Ladies at the court of Madrid, whoſe influence was promiſed in favour of Metaſtaſio's Sicilian claims; but whoſe names have been concealed.

and delicacy in Europe were gratified; and that all your hypochondriac complaints were entirely ſubdued! ſhew me a good example, as you have already a bad one, and I will try to follow it.

Your muſic to my *Nice* is worthy of you. Its merit begins by the touching tones of the *flute*, and encreaſes to the noble ſimplicity which belongs to ſuch compoſitions. I readily give way to you, or rather am proud of being vanquiſhed by you: and who would be aſhamed of being ſurpaſſed in muſic by my incomparable Farinelli? I have been no leſs enchanted with the ſetting of the little dedication: *ſe mi dai**. But in this laſt you have a little forgotten that nature is not laviſh of Farinelli's, and that the execution of this muſic, in order to have all its effect, requires the excellence of its compoſer. Though I am no muſician, further than is neceſſary to a Poet, I comprehend your intention, and try hard to ſecond it. But *ſpiritus promptus eſt, caro autem infirma.* Let us underſtand one another: I ſpeak of my voice; let no

* To what this alludes does not appear, it is not the initial verſe of any ſong in Metaſtaſio's works that I have been able to find.

equivoque

equivoque enter your head injurious to my faith.

Oh my dear Farinelli, what agitation, tumult, and ſtorms have you awakened in my mind, by confiding to me the great, though unmerited fortune of my *Nice!* You, who know the vanity of poets, conceal no circumſtance from me which can exalt it to its higheſt elevation. In ſhort, I perceive very plainly the malignant pleaſure you take in turning my head, and ſeeing how I am agitated between pride and confuſion; ſelf complacence and envy. Oh happy *Nice!* who could have imagined that I ſhould ever have envied thy fate? with what veneration ought I not to regard thee in future.

You believe me in great danger here from the charms of ſome tranquil Teutonic Beauty. Oh how miſtaken you are! Here love and hatred never diſturb the ſleep of any mortal: here the body cares very little for the affairs of the mind: at night you may be a favourite, and in the morning unknown. Eagerneſs, agitation, ſolicitude, little quarrels, reconciliations, gratitude, vengeance, the language of the eyes, the eloquence of ſilence, in ſhort whatever can give pleaſure or pain in the delicate commerce of ſouls,

is *terra incognita*, or thought ridiculous and fit only for the embelliſhment of romances. It is incrédible to what a pitch of indolence the placid nymphs of this place are arrived. I ſhould deſpair of finding one that would relinquiſh a game at *Piquet* for the loſs or death of her deareſt lover. There are many who would think the turning aſide from their ſampler among the moſt myſterious exceſſes of genius. And you fear for my tranquillity? Make yourſelf eaſy. I run no riſk. Aſſure the moſt benign lady, who, without my having deſerved her compaſſion, generouſly intereſts herſelf in my ſuppoſed danger, that I am ſafe. Expreſs to her likewiſe my moſt humble and grateful ſentiments for the patronage with which ſhe honours my writings. Tell her that the noble picture which you have been pleaſed to draw of her, has rendered me more ſenſible to the cold of the north, where no ſuch plants ever bloſſom. You, in ſhort, were born when the moon was increaſing, all thrives to your wiſh. It is neceſſary to be a Farinelli, a friend, and a twin brother, not to be envied by me.

From this frankneſs, which I ſhould not have uſed to any but yourſelf, it is eaſy for you to imagine whether I could poſſibly have

regarded

regarded you as my voluntary rival, in the office of treaſurer of Coſenza. The notice which your brother had obtained of it, was neither from me, nor exact in itſelf: and if it had, I ſhould never have attributed the fault to my dear Farinelli, who loves me too well, and who thinks too nobly. I have mentioned it, becauſe we are eager to ſpeak of what gives us pain. And how can I refrain from vexation, my dear friend, to ſee myſelf ſtript in this manner, without any crime, of all the fruits of my poor labours; of all my hopes, and of all ſupport for my old age! Do you wiſh to know the extent of my misfortunes? Hear, and pity me.

Charles VI. as a reward for my long ſervices, and *to ſupply my unpaid ſalary*, granted me a thouſand crowns in Sicily, on a biſhoprick or benefice in that kingdom. But all the Biſhops, Abbots, and beneficial Clergy, became, from that time, immortal: and the kingdom was loſt before I had received a penny. The treaſurerſhip of Coſenza in *Calabria* becoming vacant, and my auguſt patron remembering my arrears, deſtined it for me: I took poſſeſſion, ſpent more than 800 ducats *of my own money*, in fees and other expences; but before I had

had begun to reap the firſt crop, the armed Spaniards entered the kingdom, and I remained with my patent in my hand, ready for curling my hair, or folding up ſugar-plumbs. My preſent moſt clement ſovereign (*q*), is obliged, by the circumſtances of the times, to diminiſh the ſalaries of her ſervants; but in order to compenſate this diminution, as well as to conſole me for my former loſſes, ſhe has aſſigned me 1500 florins, and not a Canonicate, in Milan. Five years have elapſed ſince this favour was promiſed, but a thouſand impediments have intervened, which I have not underſtood, even while I have *experienced* their effects. Now what do you think of all this? Is not mine an afflicting caſe? Yet I exaggerate nothing. After fifteen years ſervice, not indeed from the fault of my patrons, but of my enemy Fortune, I am in a worſe ſtate, than when I left my country.

From this faithful narrative, you may eaſily imagine what confidence I place in you: a confidence which I owe in return for yours. How can I ever ſufficiently thank you for the affectionate and zealous manner with which you have offered

(*q*) The Empreſs Queen, impoveriſhed by a ſeven years' War.

to

to put me in a way to bring this unfortunate buſineſs to a *happy determination?* I recogniſe in theſe uncommon teſtimonies of friendſhip, the heart of my Farinelli: and I am proud of my ſagacity for having ſaid a thouſand times, that in you, all was harmony, all of the ſame degree of excellence. I am already as much your debtor, from the eagerneſs which you have manifeſted to ſerve me, as if you had been ſucceſsful: becauſe the reaſons for being obliged, depend more upon the exertions than the event. To furniſh you with ſome authentic documents, I encloſe *a ſolemn certificate from the ſecretary of the ſupreme counſel for Italy*; alſo *the conceſſion of the treaſurerſhip*: as well as *the diſpatches by which the appointment was then notified at Naples.* My poſſeſſion in Naples will be proved the inſtant you require it. I will appoint a perſon in the beautiful Parthenope (*r*) who ſhall aſſiſt, when and where you pleaſe, in this enquiry. "Oh if you could but relate this melancholy tale to your auguſt ſovereign! For full of clemency, generoſity, and juſtice, as the world pronounces and you deſcribe her, it is im-

I

(*r*) Naples.

poſſible

poſſible but that her ſoul muſt incline to grant me ſome redreſs. Indeed I ſhould now regard the favour as wholly new, from the hands of ſo great a benefactreſs. Her bounty, though beſtowed on a perſon who may want merit, would yet fall on one that is known to you, and therefore the beneficent act of a royal patroneſs would certainly not remain a ſecret; but be held out as an example to her equals, and a conſolation to the oppreſſed. And if the voice of a poor Graſs-hopper of Parnaſſus, like myſelf, could poſſibly reach the ears of poſterity; they, and their children's children, ſhould know the pious and powerful hand which deigned to ſuſtain and protect me, in deſpight of the utmoſt efforts of cruel and capricious Fortune (*s*)."

And are not the innumerable teſtimonies which my dear *Gemello* has given me of his love ſufficient, but they muſt be ratified by gifts! *Vanilla*, *chocolate*, *bark*, extract of *am-*

(*s*) Princes are, in general, ignorant of an eſſential rule in commerce, which enjoins its votaries to *buy cheap*, *and ſell dear*. If her Catholic Majeſty had wiſhed to make a *good bargain* in the purchaſe of fame, ſhe might have had a great penny-worth, in ſerving a *Poet* gifted with ſo good and grateful a heart, as Metaſtaſio; who, for inconſiderable temporary advantage, would have rendered his royal benefactreſs immortal.

aranth, jars of *ſnuff*.——But this is overpowering me in ſuch a manner, as to deprive me of all hope of ever making any return. All I can do, at preſent, is to begin to be grateful, by confeſſing the debt, and wiſhing for powers to pay it.

The Court is at an imperial caſtle in Hungary, where, conſequently, is Madame Fouchs; ſo that I am not likely to ſee her ſoon, as I am already booted to go to Moravia, where I ſhall remain till October, with our moſt worthy Counteſs of Althan, partly by the advice of the Phyſicians, and partly for the enjoyment of her noble ſeat. So that your commiſſion to Madame Fouchs cannot be executed till my return. I had already delivered your meſſage to the Counteſs of Althan, in the *Favorita* Gardens, and in the midſt of a numerous aſſembly: ſhewing, with great oſtentation, your *very ſhort* letter. I am unable to tell you how pleaſed this lady was with your courteous remembrance, how curious to know the particular phraſe with which you had ordered me to expreſs it, and with what eagerneſs ſhe wiſhed to be minutely and repeatedly informed of your health and preſent ſituation, intereſting herſelf in the one, and exulting in

the

the other. I had then the whole company upon me, to whom I was obliged to ſing over and over again the ſame *Canzone*, as well as thoſe airs which you had conſtantly ſung during ſo many years in the royal apartments (*t*). It would have delighted you, as it did me, to a very great degree, to ſee how freſh you were ſtill in memory, after ſo long an abſence, in a climate governed by oblivion. (*u*)

And are you then determined to have my picture? Oh how vexatious! The patience neceſſary to ſerve as a model to the indiſcretion of a painter, is to me the moſt difficult of all virtues to attain. Hitherto there are no other pictures of me than thoſe ſpurious ſatyrs which the printers have placed at the head of my works; and they move my bile every time I chance to ſee them. But who can reſiſt the ſolicitations of a beloved twin brother? At my return from the country, I ſhall undertake this buſineſs, as a penitence for my ſins, and try to indulge your *longing* in ſuch a manner as may prevent a

(*t*) Theſe were *Pallido il ſole*; *Per queſto dolce ampleſſo*; & *Ah non laſciarmi, no*, all ſet by Haſſe.

(*u*) Farinelli had been three times at Vienna, before he went to Spain, in 1737. His firſt engagement at the Imperial court was, in 1727.

miſcarriage.

miſcarriage. But you muſt not be ſurpriſed if you ſee an hypochondriac countenance on the canvas, becauſe I ſhall find it very difficult to ſmile in the painter's face, unleſs I can perſuade ſome Faun or Dryad to aſſiſt at the operation, and help to ſweeten the bitter taſk.

With all the diligence I could uſe, even to the confines of impertinence, I have not been able to procure the authentic certificate, and that other paper mentioned above, time enough to accompany this letter. I ſhall therefore leave orders, before my departure for the country, for them to be ſent by the ſame conveyance.

I have had two little Cantatas tranſcribed, which I wrote ſometime ſince for this court, but which are not yet very common. I ſhall incloſe theſe, but not for you. I mean them as a tribute to that illuſtrious protectreſs of the Italian Muſes, the Counteſs of Bellalcazar. If, however, you would illuſtrate them with your notes and majeſtic voice, I ſhould be certain that the tribute would be highly approved, by a lady of ſuch delicate taſte.

I finiſh becauſe I am on the point of ſetting off, and the exact moment of my departure does not depend on myſelf. Love me

as

as much as I do you, and you will gratify the infinite avidity which I feel for your affection, and do juſtice to the tender ſolicitude with which I am, and ever ſhall be, &c.

Vienna, Auguſt 26th. 1747.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR dear letter of Oct. 29th, as uſual, was replete with the balm of that affection, of which I am ſo extremely ſolicitous and vain. The groteſque deſcription of the magnificent habitation whence you wrote, has frequently made me laugh, and long to embrace my pleaſant Nennillo (*x*).

* * * * * *

I have laughed quite as much, though in my ſleeve, at your lively picture of Armida. Oh poor Nennillo!

You will ſoon have *Armida placata*. I hope you will find in it much to approve,

(*x*) The reſt of the period is in the Neapolitan *Patois*, which I am unable to decipher. All I can diſcover is, that the corpulency, as well as abſurdity, of the firſt female ſinger (perhaps the *Teſi*) had been the ſubject of Farinelli's pleaſantry.

particularly

particularly in the part of the firſt woman, and firſt man, for whom I have taken the moſt pains. And you would have found in it much leſs to blame, if that great booby, Migliavacca, after I had corrected with great labour, the whole opera, had not taken the liberty in tranſcribing it, to alter, add, and retrench at his pleaſure. This put me into a violent rage, when he told it me at my return from the country. His excuſe was, the impoſſibility of communicating to me his doubts ſoon enough for the time which you had preſcribed for finiſhing it. With all this, the ſubject is gay, and cannot have been ſo injured, as not to leave room to hope for its meeting with ſucceſs.

From what has happened, you may judge, that our Migliavacca is capable of writing a good ſong, cantata, ſonnet, and ſuch things as, in ſhort, require no great art in the conduct and management of the paſſions, or ſupport of characters. But for theatrical action and effect, I have found his judgment leſs matured than his age, which is about thirty, promiſed; or his other little and pleaſing compoſitions, made me expect. I tell you this, that you may know preciſely what to hope, if you ſhould think of employing him.

I wiſhed to render ſervice to all, and to recommend engaging the Teſi; but now it is brought to a criſis, I cannot deceive you. Find out her abilities, and then do her good, if you can. It is certain that experience, of which, at preſent, ſhe is in want, might render her much better; but you wiſh me to ſpeak of the preſent, and not propheſy concerning the future. It is not neceſſary to communicate my ſincerity to Madame, who would perhaps not be pleaſed with it. Let it be a hint to you, but not attended with ill will to me. It will therefore be more prudent to ſend your letters by the Venetian Ambaſſador's bag, in which I incloſe my own. And when you deſire to remit to Migliavacca ſome compenſation for his trouble, I beg of you to do it by means of the Teſi, who intereſts herſelf in his affairs. I did nothing more than try that you ſhould be as well ſerved as poſſible; and this I have done, and ever ſhall do, for my valued Gemello.

My picture for you, ſet off from Vienna with Prince Trivulſi, the beginning of October. This Prince entreated to have the care of it, and carried it with him to Venice, that it might afterwards travel with more

more ſecurity. I know not how it is to go on, but we may depend on his diligence, and true eagerneſs to favour me, and to pleaſe you. Who knows whether, by the time this letter arrives, I ſhall not be already in your hands, and perhaps preſent at the rehearſal of the charming Armida, where the original would eſteem himſelf moſt happy to be alſo.

I ſhould wrong the good heart of my dear Gemello by reiterating my entreaties about the *Percettorial* buſineſs; I feel with what affection you wiſh to forward it, and know that your ſoul is incapable of aſſuming the ſhameful character of a dealer in that kind of ſmoke which abounds in courts. I reflect on what I would do for you, if I were able; and have not the leaſt doubt of your doing every thing for me, which circumſtances will admit. The excuſe of *example*, which has been urged from Naples, is eaſily refuted; there are three very juſt ways of preventing my caſe from ever becoming a precedent to any other. In the firſt place, the diſpatches might ſay, that *the receiverſhip was reſtored to me for the ſame reaſon as offices are reſtored* to others, who poſſeſſed them by a weighty title; that is, by *having purchaſed them.* And this

will be no lie: the *Percettoria* was not obtained by me as a free gift, but in recompence for a *promiſed ſalary which had not been payed.* And if the reward agreed upon for labours of the brain are not paid in money, what muſt be the capital of we poor crickets of Parnaſſus? Should this expedient be diſapproved, here is another which equally precludes precedent: the place of *Percettoria* may be reſtored to me, *not as the reſtoration of an ancient poſſeſſion, but as a new favour which has not the leaſt relation* to the old grant. Where would be the extravagance of a generous Prince, protector of the fine arts, ſpontaneouſly exerciſing his munificence on a man who, by chance, if not merit, is eſteemed in Europe not the meaneſt of his profeſſion? If this ſecond road ſhould be thought impaſſable, though it appears to me the moſt worthy of the royal grandeur of ſuch a ſovereign, here is, laſtly, a third: which is, *the cauſing it to be bought as a new purchaſe*, which will equally preclude all precedent of reſtitution. Do not forget, my dear friend, to ſuggeſt theſe expedients, that the fear of precedent may not check the generous propenſity of the ſovereign. I ſhould not have wearied you ſo long on this ſubject,

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had it not ſeemed abſolutely neceſſary to furniſh you with arms to combat in my favour. I thank you for the recipe, which I ſhall have made up exactly, and try its efficacy with the greater hope of ſucceſs, as every thing is more dear that comes from my beloved Gemello, than from any other quarter.

Your idea of providing for the expence of my journey, is extremely grateful to me, as a proof of your affection; but think how great would be the difficulties of other kinds; and how little occaſion there is for this proof, to convince me that our friendſhip is reciprocal.

Our worthy Counteſs of Althan has received news of you, and of being remembered by you, with her uſual kindneſs and pleaſure. With reſpect to muſic, whatever ſhe hears, Farinelli continues to be her hero: and as a proof of this, ſhe has freighted a bark with ſalutations for you, which I ſhall diſpatch, on condition that you, in return, will preſent my conſtant reſpects to the Ducheſs of Bejar, whoſe picture in your letter has haunted me ever ſince I ſaw it. Addio, dear Gemello, be careful of your

 health,

health, and ſometimes think of your Metaſtaſio.

Vienna, Dec. 7, 1747.

As no letters to Farinelli have been preſerved, that were written in 1748, we ſhall return to his correſpondents, Filipponi, and Paſquini, to whom he ſeems to have written with great openneſs of heart.

LETTER III.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

YOUR moſt welcome letter of the 2d inſtant, found me in the pleaſant country of Moravia, where I have been many months, far from the noiſe of the city, in purſuit of that health, which always ſeems near, yet when I try to catch it, the phantom gives me the ſlip. I wander through two vaſt domains belonging to the incomparable Counteſs Althan, where the generoſity of the magnificent lady of the manſion, the noble variety of the company, the abundance of whatever can contribute to delight, as well as comfort, the princely apartments,

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the ſituation, air, walks, converſation, and, in ſhort, the whole tenor of a life ſufficiently ruſtic for the enjoyment of all the beauties of nature, without being deprived of the conveniences of art; and above all, the advantages which I feel in this tranquil retirement, from the care that is taken of my diſordered machine; theſe make me forget the complaints I brought with me, which, either from the chearfulneſs the mind acquires here, or the circumſtances juſt mentioned, appear, or are, in reality, nearly ſubdued. This is the news which you deſired.

Soſlowitz, Sept. 29, 1747.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

GENERAL Stampa quitted this place, on his return to Milan, the end of laſt week. Conſigned to his care, and directed to you, are the MSS. for our Padre Paoli, which Count Canale had ſo repeatedly promiſed him. And now I am liberated from a commiſſion which has long lain heavy on my conſcience.

They would have been ſent much ſooner, if any ſafe conveyance could have been found; but MSS. of which there are no duplicates, are of ſuch conſequence, that it ſeemed neceſſary to meaſure my ſcruples by the tender regard which an author has for his own productions; ſo that I hope to be thanked for the delay.

Muſt I ſend you the uſual compliments of the ſeaſon? It is the exact period for this ceremony; as, by the time this letter arrives, it will be in general performance throughout Chriſtendom. But let us not contaminate our friendſhip by ſuch vulgar, worn-out, and inſipid forms, which now are become a burthen to ſociety, and a diſgrace for real friends to uſe; they neither excite benevolence, nor prevent the coldneſs of neglect. I know that you have no doubt of my affection and good wiſhes, and that I am ſure of yours: ſo that without new proteſtations, the whole year is Chriſtmas with us, reciprocally.

My annual retreat into the country for near two months, had turned out ſo profitable, that I flattered myſelf with the hopes of having wholly ſubdued my nervous complaints, and all the other barbarous enemies

united

united to annoy me; but the firſt cold precurſors of winter have again driven me near the enemy, from whom, however, I courageouſly defend myſelf, hoping at length to tire them out. And indeed their aſſaults are leſs frequent and leſs furious than formerly: if I can ſtill diminiſh their forces a little, I ſhall, in this particular, be content with my fate: never expecting a profound peace, but a leſs unequal war.

LETTER V.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I HAVE attentively read your new paſtoral fable, and without entering upon a minute examination of it, I aſſure you, with that candour to which we are mutually accuſtomed, that it has pleaſed me much more than the *Generous Spartan*, in all its parts, except the ſtyle; as in that, to own the truth, you appear to me ſometimes too negligent. You will ſay, and with great truth, that the interlocutors ſhould ſpeak a language ſuitable to their ſtation. But I believe, that between the language of real and theatrical ſhepherds,

ſhepherds, there ſhould be the ſame proportion of difference, as the beſt writers uſually obſerve between real and theatrical princes. Human nature is vain, and never pleaſed with thoſe portraits which lower the advantageous opinions which it forms of itſelf; like thoſe beauties, who are unwilling to ſit, unleſs to ſuch dextrous painters as can draw their likeneſs, more from the good than bad features of their faces; diminiſhing in ſome with modeſt adulation wherever there is exceſs, and adding to others, with the ſame caution, whatever is wanting to perfection. Guarini was too ſenſible of this weakneſs, and meant to flatter it in his celebrated *Paſtor fido*, by the happy pretext of his perſonages being of divine origin, attributing to ſhepherds the language of philoſophers and heroes: and by artfully mixing whatever was moſt pleaſing in the country, moſt grand in courts, and moſt ingenious in the ſchools, has formed ſuch a magic compoſition, as, in ſpite of the many poetical canons which he dared to violate, has extorted admiration, not only from his own countrymen, but the moſt poliſhed people in every other part of Europe. Indeed he has often had the addreſs to ſoften the rigour even of

inexorable

inexorable critics themſelves, who only read his work in order to condemn it.

But ſuch ſeem to me the laws to which it is neceſſary to ſubmit, in order to pleaſe by imitating nature. How much it may be neceſſary to change the materials, in order to excite wonder and delight; and what is the difference between imitating nature, and nature herſelf, are not ſubjects to be diſcuſſed in a ſhort letter. Perhaps, ſome time or other, I may explain myſelf more fully, if it ſhould pleaſe providence to grant me a few quiet days among thoſe that are yet in ſtore (*y*).

And now I congratulate myſelf as well as you, on your laſt production, not only in compliment to my own judgment, but for that which experience has here pronounced concerning your abilities; indeed I plainly perceive that more curioſity is excited in your readers by this compoſition, than by any other of your dramatic writings.

I am much obliged to your Meſſrs. Walther for the favourable opinion they enter-

(*y*) He here, doubtleſs, alludes to his notes on an extract from Ariſtotle's Poetics, which were not publiſhed till after his deceaſe. See Zatta's Edit. Venice, 1783. Tom. xvi. And that of Nice, 1786.

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tain of my works; but it is not for me to pronounce upon the expediency of the enterprise; it is their business to examine how the expence of a new impression of my writings will be repaid by the public. There are already *nine* editions at Venice; there are others at Rome, Milan, Naples, and Lucca; and perhaps still more of which I am ignorant. Hence, if this edition is not superior in paper, type, correctness, and ornaments, it will be confounded in the croud of others, which are either very bad, or not above mediocrity.

I have not yet seen the Dresden Boileau; pray send it by the first safe and speedy conveyance; do the same by Voltaire.——But what can I say to second your eagerness about this new impression? I have but few inedited pieces in my possession, and of these few, some I cannot, and others I ought not, to make public. However, I have not the heart to refuse granting any request of yours. I shall therefore collect, on your account, a small number of cantatas of my writing, which are limping about in a miserable state, that has not been bettered by the hands of the lovers of poetry who have given them house room; but these will not

amount to above twelve or fourteen. Beſides this, I ſhall take a copy of ſome editions of Venice, and ſheet by ſheet, correct the errors with which they abound, that they may ſerve as originals for the new edition. But ſtay!—This is not all. There is an opera intituled SIFACE, which I wrote many years ago, againſt my will. I muſt explain myſelf. Obliged to accommodate a very old and imperfect drama, I began by new verſifying, and arranging its ſcenes; but by changing and changing, there did not remain a ſingle verſe of the original, and very little in the diſpoſition of the ſcenes. I never would conſent to legitimate this offspring, and yet it has always paſſed in Italy for mine. If I can find a copy not much disfigured, I ſhall correct this drama, and with a ſhort hiſtorical information to the public, add it to the new edition. In conſideration of the pains I ſhall take, I muſt impoſe on you, ſome conditions. The firſt is, that you will undertake to correct the preſs yourſelf, and in a ſhort advertiſement inform the public of the enormous defects of former editions, and of the advantages of the new, without entering at all into the uſual panegyrics on the author, for this

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plain reaſon, that you are too friendly and partial a judge for ſuch an undertaking. In the ſecond place, Meſſrs. Walther muſt convince me of the elegance of their typography, by ſending me a proof-ſheet, as a ſpecimen, and ſolemnly agree to an exact performance of their promiſe to the public.

I rejoice that my *Demofoonte* is in ſuch maſterly and friendly hands; make what uſe of it you pleaſe, as I am certain it will receive no injury(z). Oh how I envy your vicinity to that moſt worthy Count Archinto! I have long reſpected his merit. But during his reſidence at this court, he infinitely increaſed my reverence. Return him, I entreat you, my moſt humble thanks for the benignant remembrance of me which he has deigned to preſerve; aſſuring him of my moſt grateful ſentiments and wiſhes for his health, concerning which I daily fabricate in my mind a thouſand ſmiling and happy ideas of the time to come.

(z) Haſſe was at this time new ſetting the opera of *Demofoonte* for the court of Dreſden: many of the airs were afterwards performed in England by Mingotti, about the year 1755, when the admirable *Cantabile: Se tutti i mali miei*, was conſtantly encored during the run of the opera.

I have

I have dried up your brain ſufficiently for to-day; I will not deprive it of all moiſture at once. It is well if any thing more remains for me to do. Take care of your health for your own ſake and for that of your friends, among whom I claim a diſtinct place, as the eſteem and friendſhip is diſtinct, of yours, &c.

Vienna, Jan. 27, 1748.

LETTER VI.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

When you have a favourable opportunity, I entreat you to ſalute, in my name, the worthy Count de Richecourt. Though I was not able to enjoy his company and converſation at Count Canale's ſo often as I wiſhed, yet I ſaw enough of him to convince me how much he is indebted to nature and to himſelf, for his uncommon ſhare of merit. I am infinitely obliged to him for allowing me a place in his remembrance, and ſhall be extremely indebted to you, if you will try, from time to time, to mingle me among the crowd of his other more grave,

uſeful, or pleaſant ideas. I bear the exceſs of your eſteem for me, as it ariſes from the exceſs of your friendſhip, of which I am ſo anxious, that it ſubdues my ſhame for owing it to a miſtake. Continue to love me, but without examining the motives. I tremble leſt, at a future time, you ſhould meet with ſome pious ſoul or other who, in chriſtian charity, ſhould ſtrive to undeceive you. As to the ſtate of my health, I muſt confeſs, that my patience is not in perfect equilibrium. The journey is long, and philoſophy lame. I neither know what influence the ſoul has over our machine, nor how it is communicated, being ſubſtances of ſuch a different nature; but I feel in a more lively manner than I wiſh, that my own poor little ſoul pays dearly for the decays of its manſion.

After you have confeſſed yourſelf to be jealous of me, I know not how to comport myſelf with your prieſteſs. I muſt recommend myſelf to Plato, an excellent comforter of huſbands. Pray preſent my compliments to her platonically. Do not injure me in her opinion, and allow me, with all due reſtrictions, to aſſure her of my being no leſs hers than yours.

Vienna, Feb. 3, 1748.

The

The two following letters would not have been inſerted, had it not been imagined, that ſuch readers as intereſt themſelves in the dramatic works of Metaſtatio, would be curious to know his own ideas concerning their performance.—Theſe letters, at leaſt, may be of uſe, not only to the *directors* and *performers* of the individual drama of *Demofoonte*, but of operas in general.

LETTER VII.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

Oh great Paſquini! Great Paſquini! Shew me my plan however, that I may not cenſure you for my own blunders. If you aſk me how I intended the ſituations of my *Demofoonte* to be diſpoſed in the theatre, and how I ſhould have arranged them if I had directed the whole myſelf, it was proper that I ſhould write to you what you mention. If you aſk me who ſhould be placed on the right hand, and who on the left, I muſt tell you I never meant to regulate that by the dignity of the perſonages, but by the convenience and neceſſity of the action. And if,

in favour of ſuch convenience and neceſſity, the ſuperior perſonages chance to be on the left of the inferior, they may be reſpected and diſtinguiſhed in various ways; for example: by being a little forwarder on the ſtage than the reſt, or being ſituated in the middle of the ſtage and facing the audience, while the ſubaltern characters are further on the ſtage, with their ſides to the audience and faces towards the principal perſonages. And indeed by a thouſand other expedients they may be diſtinguiſhed, without having the right ſide of the ſtage aſſigned to them. If further, in purſuing this ſubject, you ſhould aſk what characters have a right to exact reſpect, whether *Dircea* from *Creuſa*, or *Creuſa* from *Dircea*, I ſhould tell you *Dircea*, as an undiſcovered Princeſs, owes to *Creuſa* all thoſe manifeſtations of reſpect which are due from private individuals to perſons of royal condition. But for heaven's ſake explain to me, if you can, why you think reſpect is ſhewn to the principal perſonages by their always occupying the right ſide of the ſtage? I could give more reaſons againſt it than thoſe already mentioned, if I had time to write them. I have explained myſelf on this ſubject to Baron Dieſcau, and to Signor

Haſſe,

Haſſe, though more conciſely, as he is a profeſſional man. You are right, however, in ſuppoſing that *Dircea* ſhould take place, upon the ſtage, of *Creuſa*. Yet, in my opinion, wholly wrong in imagining that the right ſide is always the poſt of honour.

But before the arrival of this letter, I hope you will be convinced by what I have written to Baron Dieſcau.

Vienna, Feb. 16th. 1748.

LETTER VIII.

TO BARON DIESCAU, AT DRESDEN.

It is a great miſtake, in my opinion, to imagine that the right or left ſide of the ſtage determines the pre-eminence of theatrical characters. Theſe places ought to be occupied according to the neceſſity of the actors. It is neceſſary, for example, that the actor ſhould be near the perſon to whom he would ſpeak, or whom he would detain, aſſault, defend, or tranſact any kind of buſineſs with, that would be difficult or ridiculous to perform in any other ſituation. Wherever a great perſonage happens to be, will become the principal place; he may, however, indi-

cate his ſuperiority by being a little forwarder on the ſtage than his inferiors, which will be a leſs equivocal diſtinction than the right hand, which has varied and changes its ſignification, according to the caprice of different ages and nations. Upon theſe principles, in ſpite of the old practiſe of our theatres, I have always regulated the performance of my dramas, eſpecially *Demofoonte*; which may be ſeen in a regular plan laid down and tranſmitted to the abate Paſquini, at his requeſt, but a few days ago.

I hope, Sir, that the readineſs of my perilous obedience, will at leaſt ſecure me the honour of your patronage, for which I moſt humbly ſupplicate (*a*).

Vienna, Feb. 21, 1748.

LETTER IX.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI, AT TURIN.

To day, in contention with this letter, the Marquis della Roſea ſet off for Turin; we ſhall ſee who will arrive firſt. I would not confide it to him, that you might have two

(*a*) Baron Dieſcau was long ſuperintendant of the lyric theatre of the electoral king of Poland, Auguſtus III.

mementos of me, inſtead of one. He will tell how much I love and eſteem you; and do you aſſure him, of the indelible traces of veneration and affection which he has left impreſſed in my mind, and try to preſerve him in that benevolent and partial diſpoſition towards me, which he manifeſted at his departure.

I wiſhed very much to ſecond your hint concerning the ſubject of a ſonnet, but my muſes at preſent are troubled with hyſteric affections; however, we will think of it when they become more tractable.

Vienna, April 28th, 1748.

LETTER X.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I have here the ſpecimens which M. Walther the printer has communicated; and ſhould do well to ſay no more. But if you wiſh to fatten him, you may ſay, *that I am extremely occupied, and cannot poſſibly diſpoſe of myſelf; nor indeed dare I hope for leiſure ſufficient to ſecond the generous partiality of Signor Walther, to whom I beg you to make due acknowledgements on my behalf.*

Know, that *Semiramide* is exalted to the ſtars, thanks to the excellence of the performers, and the magnificence of the decorations, in ſpite of an *archvandalian* muſic, which is inſupportable. The *Teſi* has acted in a manner that has ſurpriſed me and every human creature in Vienna. *Venturini* and *Amorevoli* have pleaſed extremely. *Monticelli* has been much admired. *Lenzi* and the *Favaglini* have done wonders. In ſhort, it is one of the moſt magnificent ſpectacles which can be preſented by a ſovereign. The moſt rigid matrons, the moſt ancient and virtuous miniſters, and prelates, compoſe the moſt numerous and partial part of the audience.

June 29th. 1748.

This opera, the firſt which had been performed at the imperial court, ſince the death of the emperor Charles VI. was repreſented in celebration of the peace, concluded at Aix la Chapelle. Monticelli and Amorevoli, who were in England from 1741, to 1746, after going thence to Venice, went from that city to Vienna, in order to perform on this occaſion. The opera of *Semiramide*, which had been originally ſet by Vinci for Rome, in 1729, and afterwards by Porpora for Venice,

1735,

1735, was now new ſet by the celebrated *Bononcini*, who at near ninety years of age, was invited from Paris on the occaſion.

No poem ſeems to have been produced by our author this year, except a very ſhort *compliment*, by order of the empreſs queen, on the birth-day of the emperor Francis the firſt, which was pronounced with muſic, at ſeven years old, by the arch-duke Joſeph, afterwards emperor. It was ſet by Reutter, at that time the imperial Maeſtro di capella.

COMPLIMENTO.

Di quanto a sì gran giorno
Son debitore, Auguſto Padre, intendo:
Ma non ſo dirlo. Ah voglia il Ciel che in breve
Lo dican l'opre: e che ritrovi il mondo
In quel che far desìo
Il ſuo ben, la tua gloria, e il dover mio.
Su la mia fronte intanto
Fiſſa il paterno ciglio:
E leggi il cor d'un figlio,
Che non ſi ſa ſpiegar.

Ma, che per or ha il vanto
Di riſpettarti al meno:
Ma, che comprende a pieno
Quanto ti deve amar.

The ſentiments of this little poem bear all the marks of delicacy and propriety, which

ſo eminently characterize the encomiaſtic productions of our aulic bard. They breathe no adulation that could ſhame the parent, or degrade the ſon.

How much I owe to this great day,
Oh Parent moſt auguſt, I underſtand,
Though utt'rance to my thoughts I cannot give.
May heav'n ere long, let actions for me ſpeak,
And all mankind diſcover how I wiſh
Their good, the glory of my ſire, and well
To practice ev'ry duty of my ſtate.

Till when, let fond paternal eyes
With fix'd regard my face behold,
And read my heart, which vainly tries
Its tender feelings to unfold.

Happy, this day, reſpect to ſhew
To him whoſe looks ſuch love inſpire;
Till time more ample means beſtow
Of rev'rence to ſo great a ſire.

LETTER XI.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

While I was preparing to anſwer your letter of the 13th inſt. a parcel arrives from the ſecretary of legation at this court, with another letter from you, dated the 17th, and with it two pleaſing cantatas: *Lavinia & Didone*; a very

a very ingenious and beautiful anſwer to my Palinodia to Nice; and two ſerenatas. I am glad that an *equivaque* has produced me the pleaſure of your two compoſitions, with which you know I cannot but be pleaſed. At the ſame time, however, I muſt confeſs that I feel mortified. Vanity is the natural defect of us poor poets. And mine became exceſſive, in reflecting that a perſon of ſuch high rank (*b*), able to write verſes in ſuch a manner as to make us all aſhamed, had not diſdained to number me in the croud of her juſt admirers. But it does not become me to enquire into this myſtery. I venerate her, clip the wings of my vain glory, and haſten to ſpeak my ſentiments. You have known me long, and know that the court in which I was born, and this in which I have reſided twenty years, have not taught me the language of adulation. So that what I write, are not unmeaning words of courſe.

Know then, that without your ſolemn proteſtations, and coincident aſſertions of

(*b*) The daughter of the Emperor Charles VII. afterwards Electrice of Saxony, who, at the deceaſe of her conſort, quitting politics, attached herſelf to muſic and poetry; wrote operas in Italian, ſet them to muſic, and performed in them herſelf, in perſon. See *Germ. Tour*, and *Hiſt. of Muſic*, vol. iv. p. 580.

other

other people to whom I cannot refuſe giving credit, I ſhould never have been able to imagine that a young princeſs ſhould be able to write, and in a foreign language, ſuch excellent poetry. In the two cantatas, not only the delicate arrangement of the thoughts, the connexion of ideas, the ſelection of words, the harmony of the verſe, and the tenderneſs of expreſſion, are admirable; but what ſurpriſes me ſtill more, is a certain artful facility, which mere natural talents never furniſh; for here a firmneſs of pulſe appears, which is only to be acquired by long and laborious application. Now how is it poſſible to imagine, that ſuch painful means ſhould ever have been put in practice, by a perſon, who, from the eminence of her ſtation, can have ſo few moments to herſelf?

I am impatient to receive the other compoſitions which you promiſe me; and henceforth you may be certain of having an importunate ſolicitor on your back; for I ſhall never let you reſt in peace till I obtain from your friendſhip every thing of this kind that you can lay your hands on, unleſs prevented by an abſolute prohibition.

I congratulate you on your two ſerenatas, but on the *Orfeo* more than the *Plotina*. In the

the firſt, the ſubject being more poetical, has more inflamed your imagination than the other.

Vienna, Jan. 25, 1749.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

WILL my dear Abate never become an œconomiſt? With the precious merchandize with which you all at once oppreſſed me in your letter of the 3d inſtant, you might have been able to feed my poetical vanity for whole years, however inſatiable it may be. That a princeſs placed by providence ſo much above the generality of mortals, ſhould deign to ſuffer the productions of her admirable talents to be ſeen by me; that with a ſovereign and precious command ſhe ſhould put it out of all doubt, from what ſublime ſource my enviable fortune came; and that ſuch a glorious motive for me ſhould be aſſigned for ſuch condeſcenſion; are all ſuperabundant temptations, ſufficient to render cynic indifference ambitious, and to diſturb ſtoic inſenſibility. But that ſhe ſhould puſh her

her generoſity ſo far as to aſſign to me her own happy gifts, is a circumſtance which juſtifies what I have formerly written:

Che una ſpecie di tormento
È l'eccesſo del piacer (c).

I have read, and ſhall often read again, the firſt act of *Demetrio*, and am unable to deſcribe to you the pleaſure I have had in ſeeing one of my own children corrected of all natural defects, and ornamented with ſuch qualities as the poverty of the parent could never beſtow. I ſhould be proud of its preſent magnificent appearance, if I did not recollect how many rivers, in their courſe, are increaſed by confluent waters, and enriched by gold, which they never derive from their niggard ſource. Do you my dear Paſquini, who have not ſo many motives of confuſion as I, ſuſtain your friend in this dilemma; take his place, and repreſent for me to this beneficent and royal protectreſs, the ſentiments of veneration, gratitude and wonder, which I feel too forcibly for expreſſion; and if you believe that my ſupplications can be of any efficacy, unite them with your own, and with thoſe

(c) One ſpecies of torment is the exceſs of pleaſure.

of

of the whole poetic family, that the terrible threat may never be put in practice, of depriving Parnaſſus of ſo illuſtrious a votary.

Repreſent likewiſe, I entreat you, with the moſt profound reſpect, how much I feel myſelf honoured by the clemency of the royal electoral prince, and recommend me as much as poſſible to his patronage. Tell him that in obedience to his commands, which are ſo glorious for me, I have already begun the reviſal of my *Attilio Regolo* (*d*), and as ſoon as finiſhed, it ſhall be conſigned to the care of the Saxon miniſter at this court, for its greater ſecurity and diſpatch. Happy will it be for me, if this my offspring is allowed, in my ſtead, to pay its court to a prince ſo worthy of univerſal admiration! And do you intercede, that my *Attilio* may never again return to Vienna, as it cannot obtain, in other hands, greater glory or protection.

I am very ſenſible that you are the favourable wind, which collects on my head this ſhower of royal favour; think then how grateful this muſt be to my heart, and how much it muſt encreaſe in me that ſincere and

(*d*) This opera, written in 1740, was prevented from being performed, by the death of the emperor Charles VI.

tender

tender regard which I ſhall never ceaſe to feel for you.

P. S. In ſending my letters to the poſt, I have been put in poſſeſſion of another parcel from you, containing the ſecond act of *Demetrio*, and a cantata. In ſpite of hurry, I have twice run through this laſt. Oh poor Paſquini! and poor me! If ſovereigns write ſuch excellent poetry, what is to become of us wretched plebeian bards!

Vienna, Feb. 5th, 1749.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

LOADED with the applauſe and eſteem of the whole city and court, our moſt amiable *Venturini* ſets off on his return to Dreſden; and carries with him my *Attilio Regolo*, in order to be preſented to his royal highneſs the electoral prince of Saxony.

Since my laſt letter, having ſpoken to my moſt auguſt patroneſs, I have obtained paternal and deſpotic power over my *Attilio*; ſo that I now completely enjoy the enviable felicity of being able to offer this ſmall tribute to ſuch a great and enlightened prince, who deigns to be ſo unlimitedly my protec-

tor. Let him lock it up in the ſecret receſſes of his cabinet; expoſe it to viciſſitudes of the ſtage; or gratify the curioſity of the public, by printing it, I ſhall always regard its fate as happy to what ever uſe it ſhall be deſtined by the arbitration of ſuch a prince. Certain that my name and writings have ſometimes the ſupreme glory to occupy his thoughts, I eagerly ſeize this opportunity of laying at his feet this ſmall teſtimony of my ſubmiſſion and impatient gratitude. The gift is unworthy of him,

Né che poco io vi dia da imputar ſono
Se quanto poſſo dar tutto vi dono.

"If all I *can* beſtow I freely give,
"No blame is due for gift diminutive.

Though deceived by friendſhip yourſelf, you did wrong to deceive his highneſs with reſpect to the merit of *Attilio*; take care however to continue the deceit. The undeceiving would now coſt too much to him who is ever yours.

Vienna, Feb. 26th. 1749.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR letter of the 17th of laſt month, has really comforted me, with the certainty that you did not take amiſs the liberty with which I treated your *Canzone*. But I was to blame for doubting it. You know me ſufficiently to be certain, that criticiſm from me can flow from nothing but true friendſhip. I know too that you aſk my opinion, not as is generally done, to procure praiſe, but to be more certain, by the vote of one in the trade. And I ſhould feel guilty of treachery, if I did not wholly open my heart, even at the riſk of diſpleaſing you. So that I place among your moſt conſiderable merits, that exemplary docility which you poſſeſs, and which is ſo uncommon to poets.

And, in return, you ſhould not forget to number among mine, the heroiſm with which I undertake to obey you, when in examining your works, I riſk the cruel alternative, either of deceiving, or offending you. But I ſee how you think on theſe ſubjects, ſo

that

that I may venture to uſe that freedom with you which I could not do with others.

Vienna, March 1, 1749.

LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

I AM enchanted with the 3d act of *Demetrio*, which arrived with your laſt letter. It ſeems to me as if the beneficent hand which has undertaken to enrich me, has been ſtill more prodigal in this gift, than in either of the former. My dear Abate, if I was leſs fearful of being ſuſpected of adulation, I ſhould enlarge more on this ſubject. But the enormous diſtance between the writer and the encomiaſt, will but too much authorize ſuſpicion. However, I cannot contain myſelf ſo entirely, as not to confeſs, candidly, that I had never believed it poſſible, to meet with ſo formidable a rival in the ſplendid buſtle of a court. But this is all *entre nous*. In the fortunate moments that you will be allowed to ſpeak to this incomparable Princeſs, forget not to make known what I think of her talents; you

cannot ſay half ſo much as I think, nor ſo little, perhaps, as not to offend. As my immediate plenipotentiary, your commiſſion extends no further than to implore her royal patronage, and to repreſent, in every point of view, my profound veneration.

Would to heaven my *Attilio*, with all his father's defects on his head, may afford his Electoral Highneſs a moment's amuſement, in return for the many favours with which his clemency has deigned to honour me. I recommend the poor pilgrim to your care: ſhew him the road, inſtruct, recommend, conduct, and let him, through your means, enjoy all the rights of hoſpitality. I know not whether he has more claims to favour than his brothers; but he has certainly coſt me the moſt pains in educating; and is leſs deficient in that ſolidity, which, though they never arrived at it, I endeavoured to procure for them all.

I congratulate you on your beautiful ode on Count Bruhl. It has really ſurpriſed me, as I was ignorant of your powers in the Pindaric ſtyle. It is majeſtic, ſpirited, rich in thoughts and images, and full of the fire and fancy which characterize that ſpecies of compoſition. In ſhort, it ſeems to me, as if

your

your Mecænus ought to be pleaſed with his Horace. I am much obliged by your communication of it, and wiſh you a long enjoyment of that juvenile vigour which ſuch enterpriſes require.

It is very true that I have not only once, but many times, entreated various perſons to remind the worthy Count Vacherbart of my ancient reverence and attachment to his perſon. I learned to reſpect him from the firſt moment of my arrival at this court, where he then reſided; and the univerſal opinion of his ſingular merit, which has ſince increaſed, makes me proud of my ſagacity.

I wiſh you much better health than you enjoyed when you wrote your laſt letter. Africa weeps, my dear Paſquini (*e*), and Italy does not ſmile: let us enjoy the few tranquil days which are ſtill allowed us by providence, and tolerating the preſent evils, hope for future good.

Vienna, March 8, 1749.

(*e*) This ſeems to allude to the inſults which the Italian States had received, at this time, from the Algerines; who, with a fleet of eleven ſhips, had alarmed the coaſt of Naples, intending to ſeize the King in the iſle of *Porcida*, where he was hunting.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE great occaſion for your aſſiſtance, but much more for your counſel. And as I have no reaſon to think that you will deny me either, I ſhall proceed to buſineſs without preface.

You will remember, or if you ſhould not, the annexed memorial will remind you, that I loſt an office in the kingdom of Naples, to which I had been appointed by the Emperor Charles VI. All others under the ſame circumſtances, at the peace, ſet about recovering their rights; I only remained tranquil, not being animated to any ſuch hope by the general tenor of my perverſe fortune. But all my friends, from whom my vanity could not conceal the innumerable favours with which I had been honoured by the clemency of your princes, have loudly and unanimouſly cenſured my indolence, in not applying to ſuch powerful patrons, who might, with ſo much probability of ſucceſs, favour my petition to the Queen of the two Sicilies. Not being able to reſiſt theſe remonſtrances,

monſtrances, I have drawn up the incloſed memorial. Now begins your miniſtry, as counſellor and commiſſary.

As counſellor therefore, read, and conſider both the letter and memorial; examine impartially, whether the juſtice of my cauſe deſerves pity and protection. Tell me if it appears to you that I may ſafely implore the aſſiſtance of theſe royal perſonages, without appearing what I am not, a mercenary man; but in this ſecond diſcuſſion, it is neceſſary I ſhould aſſure you, that when I thought of doing myſelf the honour of laying my *Attilio* at the feet of the Electoral Prince, I never dreamed of my loſt place in the kingdom of Naples. You know me well enough to believe this; but that is not ſufficient. My protectors muſt likewiſe believe it; for I prize their good opinion much more than all the wealth of Crœſus. Examine, laſtly, whether, without repugnance, your court would undertake to ſupport my claims on that of Naples. If, on inquiry, you think the attempt improper, be ſilent, never mention the buſineſs, and I ſhall be indebted to you for your advice. If, however, you are of a different opinion, you then become my commiſſary.

In that caſe, throw yourſelf at the feet of their Royal Highneſſes, explain the affair, and my want of protection; implore their aſſiſtance; procure me likewiſe, by their means, that of the King and Queen; requeſt the counſel and aſſiſtance of his excellence Count Vacherbart; ſolicit recommendations, which will be more efficacious, the ſooner they are procured. Viſit, ſpeak, write, and, in ſhort, do every thing for me that I ſhould do for you, in ſimilar circumſtances. I received no letter from you to-day, but flatter myſelf that want of health has not occaſioned your ſilence. Continue to love me, however troubleſome I may be.

Vienna, March 15, 1749.

LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

By your moſt welcome letter of the 10th inſtant, as well as by one from our dear Venturini, I am aſſured of the gracious reception of my pilgrim, *Attilio*, by his Electoral highneſs. I did not doubt of his clemency; but confeſs, that I was very anxious for

for letters to confirm it; as, beſides the reverence due to a perſonage who unites to his eminent ſtation ſo many virtues and accompliſhments, I had conceived for him, after being preſented to him at Vienna, a certain affection, which I ſhould call love, if I knew how to reconcile that word with reſpect as well in my letter as in my heart. You, by long habit, will underſtand me; therefore try, in proper time and place, to explain my meaning.

The thought of my laſt tireſome packet arriving in an evil hour, juſt when you were on the point of holding a ſerious conference with the good ſon of Maja, vexes me extremely. If I was as much a prophet as a poet, I ſhould not have been guilty of ſo great a blunder. Pardon, and pity me, for weakly giving way to the cries of my friends, ſo far as to undertake an application, to which I felt a preſaging repugnance. At preſent, I muſt write to our dear Venturini, which will be ſome relief to you. Communicate to him my letters, and the whole buſineſs. Decide together on the propriety of the application, and if it is agreed on, beg him to do every thing for me, that you would wiſh him to do for yourſelf. Adding

to the information, that the Marquis Malaſpina, the prime miniſter at Naples, has always manifeſted a partiality for me; if, therefore, he ſhould be deemed a fit inſtrument to ſecond the principal impulſe, forget not to make uſe of him.

I doubt not, but that powerful divinity, whoſe votary you are, will take as much care of your frame, as he has hitherto done of your genius. However, I am impatient to know from yourſelf the effects of his patronage. Gratify my affectionate ſolicitude, and fail not to let me know the progreſs of our ſuit.

Vienna, March 22, 1749.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Last Saturday evening, after I had written and ſent my letter to the poſt, your's of the 17th inſtant was brought to me, and with it the copy of his excellency Count Vachebart's note. I could not then, to my great affliction, acknowledge the receipt of them, for want of time; but to-

day,

day, having more leiſure, I perceive myſelf in a worſe condition, for want of an honeſt excuſe for my ſilence. Indeed this new and authentic teſtimony, of the extraordinary goodneſs with which the Electoral Prince and Princeſs honour me and my works, has ſo agitated my mind, that I am totally unable to write. I have no power to expreſs the extraordinary emotions of vain-glory, confuſion, gratitude, reverence, and many other effects, which I feel on this occaſion. They are ſuch temptations, my dear Abate, as would diſturb the moderation of the moſt tranquil Lyceum, as well as the ſtormy Parnaſſus. Think of my honour; repreſent me ſuch as I ought to be, for it may not be to my advantage were you to deſcribe me ſuch as I am. However, in the midſt of this delight, I am ſufficiently reaſonable to perceive, from the ſtyle, the part which the moſt worthy writer has had in procuring me royal favour, and with how much pleaſure he communicates it. Explain to him, in my name, the ſenſibility with which I perceive the obligations I have to his zeal.

Vienna, March 26, 1749.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE not leiſure for a long anſwer to your letter of the 24th; but I ſhall haſten to ſatisfy your doubts: for the office required, will become more difficult to obtain, as the preſent circumſtances of the peace become more diſtant. The following, therefore, are the particulars you wiſh to know previous to your application to Count Vacherbart. The place then, of which I demand the reſtitution, was not conferred on any other perſon, to my knowledge, at Vienna. This charge was eſtimated at a thouſand Neapolitan ducats *per annum*; but I am unable to inform you whether it ſtill retains its value. The King of Naples has reſtored all the confiſcated places to ſuch as have proved a valid title; and ſuch is ſurely mine, having received it in lieu of a ſalary agreed on, but not paid. Whether any have been reſtored, that were free-gifts at Vienna, I know not. Remember that the Marquis Malaſpina, will ſupply information and ſecond endeavours, but will not be the firſt mover. The chief force

force muſt have come from higher powers. And an office *de communibus* is not ſufficient. If you diſcover rocks, ſtop immediately. A zephyr will not ſuffice for our navigation, we muſt have a briſk gale. I rejoice moſt heartily at your recovery.

Vienna, March 29, 1749.

LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, in great haſte, the receipt of your letter of the 7th inſtant, and beg that the reaſons may ceaſe which prevented your anſwering mine. The Marquis Malaſpina has not told you a ſingle circumſtance of which I had not previouſly appriſed you. If my affair could have been adjudged in a court of juſtice, I ſhould not have applied to ſuch great protectors. My *receiverſhip* was not granted as *a compenſation for merit*; *it was an equivalent for a portion of promiſed ſalary, not aſſigned.* I aſked four thouſand florins, the ſum allowed Apoſtolo Zeno; three only were granted, and, for excuſe, it was ſaid that the exchequer could be charged with no more; but it was promiſed to be made up to me by ſome other

means. Hence the protection reſted on the proverb: that unpaid merit may paſs for ready money. Nor do I well know how a court of juſtice could be called on to enforce ſuch promiſes of reward; though, in equity, the refuſal would have a bad appearance. But theſe are all reveries, to which your letter led me; they ſhall be written however, ſince you wiſh it, to Count Richecourt, though I muſt confeſs that I do not approve your plan. We daily advance into the croud of human wants, and yet you would renounce, in a great meaſure, the means of ſupplying them. But enough of this. If the thing is reſolved, all counſel is vain. Addio, dear Paſquini.

Vienna, April 12, 1749.

LETTER XXI.

TO THE SAME.

By your kind letter of the 24th inſtant, I perceive with what zeal the Electoral Prince Royal has undertaken to patronize my pretenſions. Upon ſo ſolid a foundation, I ſeem authorized to build great hopes; and if theſe ſhould fail, there will always remain the glorious remembrance of a patronage, which

which does me ſo much honour. I entreat you, my dear Abate, in ſome dextrous moment, to repreſent to this royal protector, how much my reſpect is increaſed by his benevolence. Nor forget to atteſt to his excellence Count Vacherbart, how ſincerely I acknowledge myſelf indebted to him, for the royal propenſity towards me, which his example has procured. I have no doubt, but that the fear of precedent will be pleaded againſt me. But againſt this objection, ſeveral expedients are ſuggeſted in my memorial.

Vienna, April 26, 1749.

LETTER XXII.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

YOUR very kind letter of the 2d of May deſerved no cenſure, I know how affectionately you wiſhed to keep the correſpondence alive, without writing merely for the ſake of writing, contrary to ſtipulation. Nor is your letter ſo empty as you pretend. The aſſurances of your having diſcovered how ſincerely the Marquis della Rocca, and Count Ormea loved me; and your interpretations

of

of the moſt amiable Madame del Bene, are very plauſable materials and occaſions for a letter, without any other legal pretext. Return aloud, in my name, to the two firſt, the moſt tender and reſpectful acknowledgments; proteſt to the third, in a more modeſt tone, but not leſs expreſſive, how ſenſible I am of the honour which ſhe is pleaſed to confer on me.

You are much miſtaken if you ſuppoſe me to be an enthuſiaſtic collector of Antiques. I have none in my poſſeſſion, except a few for common uſe. My purſe and patience are engaged in more neceſſary works. It would be inſupportable to me, if I were conſtantly in the hands of impoſtors. I would give the whole *muſeum Florentinum*, for ſome little piece of excellent modern workmanſhip, which has neither undergone the examination of that nor any other academy. You ſee how capricious my poetics are, by this confeſſion. Count Canale ſalutes you cordially. I beg you will not forget to recommend me to the oriſons of your prieſteſs, and believe me moſt conſtantly yours.

Vienna, May 28, 1749.

END OF THE FIFTH SECTION.

SECTION VI.

LETTER. I.

TO FARINELLI.

A THOUSAND bleſſings light on, my admirable Gemello! Your letter of the 28th of January has generouſly aſtoniſhed our poor Migliavacca, with the gift of 300 Ungheri. It was with the greateſt difficuly that he could believe it real. He knew he did not merit any ſuch ſum, though he was in ſuch extreme want of it, that he abſolutely thought it to have been miraculouſly ſent, by the holy King David, the protector of poets. It has given me infinite pleaſure to think myſelf, in ſome meaſure, the inſtrument which providence has uſed in ſuccouring this poor man; and ſtill more, that the rumour of ſuch uncommon generoſity does ſo much honour to my dear twin brother. Migliavacca will not be ſilent; and I have filled both the city and court with the ſtory. I have every day the

ſatisfaction

ſatisfaction of being called upon by perſons of the higheſt diſtinction, to confirm the fact, and conſequently of being required to repeat the narration, and of obſerving what univerſal juſtice is done you. How happy it makes me to perceive that we think alike. There are thouſands and thouſands of old and new reaſons to prove that you have done right. The world will not ſoon forget to ſpeak of you.

I am glad the *Armida placata* pleaſes you, and I believe, under your direction, that it cannot fail of ſucceſs. To ſatisfy you with reſpect to the embelliſhments at the end, which you ſeem to wiſh, I have two expedients; theſe I have pointed out to Migliavacca, and when he has executed them in the manner agreed on, I will, as uſual, lend a hand, in order that you may be ſerved as you ought. In one of theſe expedients, it is propoſed, by the power of enchantment, to introduce into the texture of the drama, the court of Apollo or the Sun, according to your wiſh. But as the deſtruction of the enchantment is neceſſary to the cataſtrophe of the opera, the laſt eight or ten verſes muſt be recited in the natural grove which was ſeen at the beginning of the piece.

And with this I know not whether you will be ſatisfied. A ſimilar expedient was, however, received with applauſe in my *Sogno di Scipione*. Another method of introducing a magnificent ſcene with whatever machinery you may wiſh, is to have a *Licenza*, or compliment at the end, wholly detached from the texture of the drama; appropriating the whole feſtival to a name-day, or birth-day, of ſome royal perſonage. In this caſe, the action may be terminated without being maimed: and the ſcene changed to the Palace of the Sun, with as much ſplendor and magnificence, as you pleaſe. Here our maſter Apollo, angry with the Muſes, and the Genii their followers, with which the machine will be filled, in a pompous recitative and air, will tell them, he wonders extremely that being engaged to ſing the praiſes of the Gods of *Manſanare* *, they ſhould loſe their time in repreſenting the madneſs of *Rinaldo* and *Armida*. And commanding them all, upon pain of excommunication, to follow him inſtantly and begin the work: the Muſes and Genii, immediately riſing from their ſeats on the ſtage, in order to obey him, form a magnificent

* The river, on the banks of which Madrid is built.

dance to the harmony of a full chorus, wiſhing the audience a good night. In this expedient it is neither neceſſary that the performance ſhould be on a name or birth-pay. The *Licenza*, or farewel, may be contrived to ſerve for any other common day, as every day is proper to pay reſpect to the ſovereign of a court. For my own part, I ſhould not heſitate a moment, my dear Farinelli, to adopt this ſecond method: as the firſt, to my conception, would always appear like a wen, or tail added to the feſtival, which does not fit, and ſpoils the cataſtrophe; and at laſt, to theſe diſadvantages, muſt be added that of returning *all' orrido Boſco**, for the final verſes. Oh, but ſay you, if the firſt manner is ſo bad, why propoſe, write, and correct it? Softly, ſoftly, my maſter. In the firſt place, if you will abſolutely adopt it, there would be no hereſy in it worthy of the inquiſition. And, ſecondly, I muſt have convinced you, that if, unluckily, every thing is not arranged to your mind, it is not for want of pains, but literally from the impoſſibility of the enterpriſe. Migliavacca will ſend you, by the

* *To the horrid wood.*——The final chorus of the opera.

next

next poſt, what has been doing; and, finally, I return to the charge of recommending to you the choice of the ſecond expedient for a *Licenza*.

When, in the name of wonder, will my bleſſed picture arrive; Prince Trivulzi every poſt aſſures me, that you ought to have received it by this time. We ſhall ſee whether my evil genius will not purſue, even my portrait.

I do not remind you of the Neapolitan affair, as it would be an injury to your friendſhip to imagine it wanted a ſtimulus. If ever it ſhould ſucceed, I ſhall make ſuch a noiſe about it, that, for your ſovereign's glory and your own, it ſhall extend to China.

You flatter my vanity too much in making me hope that my writings ſometimes obtain the approbation of ſo enlightened a princeſs, as your royal miſtreſs. Such temptations as theſe would vanquiſh the moderation of the moſt humble and reſigned philoſopher. Think then what a tumult they muſt raiſe in the breaſt of a poet! Do you, my dear Gemello, who thanks to the ſingular talents with which providence has furniſhed you, have the ſupreme happineſs of approaching her throne, implore for me

ſo great a patronage; and in letting her know that I am not a ſtranger to the praiſes of her numerous royal qualities, try to obtain for me the ſovereign influence of her favour.

My noſe and my health are extremely thankful to you for having thought of them. They ought in gratitude to be both employed in your ſervice; yet I own myſelf at a loſs how to uſe the firſt with any hope of giving you pleaſure.—But ſtay—I will ſaddle it with a huge pair of ſpectacles every time I write to you, though hitherto I have had no occaſion for them.

All the ladies whom you ſalute, return your ſalutations, but particularly the counteſs of Althan. The poor counteſs of Fouchs is ſtill ſtruggling with a terrible cough, which had reduced her to a ſkeleton. At preſent her life is not in immediate danger, but her recovery will, inevitably, be very ſlow. By this time you muſt be ſufficiently tired. Pray love me in exchange for the friendſhip, eſteem, and affection, which I ſhall ever retain for you.

Vienna, March 8, 1749.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

And ſo your hand writing is ſo precious, that there is no aſpiring at the poſſeſſion of ſuch a bleſſing, without having firſt ſighed for it many Olympiads! Ah barbarous! Ungrateful man! Hyrcanian tiger! Deaf adder! Mountain cat! Tarantula of Apulia! In ſo many months could it never enter your head, to let me know that you were alive! I believe that the ſtreams of *Manſanare* are the waters of Lethe, and that you ſwim in them like a trout. I believe that you have entirely forgot my name, and if any one ſhould mention it, you would aſk, who is this Metaſtaſio? I made Migliavacca correct the *Armida Placata*, and it was ſpeedily tranſmitted to you. I wrote to you about this and my own affairs. I hoped that my picture muſt be arrived by this time, and the delicate commiſſion I gave you, executed; but with all theſe *ſtimuli*, not one ſign of life is given. I would have you take care of your ſelf. Either contrive to diſarm my poetical fury, or I ſhall transfix you with a ſatire in

your praiſe, ſufficient to make the beard of the Farneſe Hercules tremble, though made of ſtone. And here I begin. A beautiful lady whoſe nods are laws, knowing that we are friends, will have me write to you in order to propoſe for your theatre, a ſiren of ours, whom ſhe protects. The ſiren recommended is called *Colomba Mattei*; ſhe is a Roman, and ſeems about two or three and twenty, at moſt. Her voice is a ſoprano, clear in tone, without defects; has great agility, and extends, with eaſe, to two octaves, from B to b. Sings in good taſte, and has a good *portamento*. She has a well proportioned figure, fine eyes, is not ugly, acts well, and is very ambitious of diſtinguiſhing herſelf by her performance. Here ſhe has acquired univerſal applauſe, as well for her ſinging, as action; though on the ſame ſtage with our African, the Teſi, the capricious Caffariello, and a tenor in the ſervice of the Elector of Cologn, called Raaff, who ſings like a ſeraph. I, who am the father of all doubters, hear her with pleaſure, and ſhould not know what more to wiſh in her, if her ſtature, which is ſo genteel and well proportioned, had a little more height, and her voice, with all its ſweetneſs and agility, had

a very

a very little more fullneſs. She has performed three years at Palermo, as firſt womon; at Naples, as ſecond, with the Aſtrua; as firſt at the court of Bareith, in the nominal ſervice of which ſhe is at preſent; and now ſhe is ſecond to the Teſi; but will ſing no more as ſecond, unleſs with a few of the moſt celebrated profeſſors on the ſtage; as ſhe knows that the reſt are not better than herſelf. The gentlemen who direct the opera, have already requeſted her to remain here another ſeaſon; but ſhe keeps them in ſuſpenſe, having heard from ſome Maeſtro di Capella or other, before ſhe quitted Naples, that ſhe would have an application from Madrid; and it appears to me, that ſhe is more partial to the Doubloons of Spain, than the Ungheri of Germany. I am not anxious that you ſhould engage her; but I very much wiſh that the lady who patroniſes her, ſhould be convinced how implicitly ſhe has been obeyed. So that if you do not want her, at leaſt write me a letter that may preſerve my credit. But if you ſhould wiſh to enter into a treaty with her, in order to ſave time, at ſo enormous a diſtance, you might include in your letter to me, a ſketch of an article, ſpecifying the ſalary and the conditions by

which it is to be obtained; and by this ſketch, I ſhall regulate my conduct, always ſtudying your intereſt moſt aſſuredly more than that that of any other. I muſt tell you, that I make a great ſacrifice, by entering into this theatrical negociation. Though if you were to ſee from what beautiful lips the commands I execute came, you would approve my condeſcenſion. But let us have done with ſirens*.

How am I to account for your profound ſilence about my loſt place, which has ſo

* By this account of the opera ſingers at Vienna, in 1749, we may judge of Metaſtaſio's opinions, candour, and good taſte, in ſpeaking of vocal talents. *Caffarelli* came young into England, to great diſadvantage, as the immediate ſucceſſor of *Farinelli*; but afterwards mounted to the ſummit of his art, not only in talents, but *caprice*. The *Teſi* never was in England, nor a favourite of Metaſtaſio; but as an actreſs, as well as ſinger, in a grand, more than an amiable ſtyle, ſhe acquired great reputation, particularly in the German courts. His character of the *Mattei* is exact to the niceſt degree of diſcrimination, as many perſons ſtill living, who ſaw and heard her afterwards in England, as ſecond woman with *Mingotti*, and firſt with *Potenza* and *Elizi*, will allow. And the high praiſe he has beſtowed on the celebrated Tenor, *Raaf*, was that of every feeling judge of vocal abilities who heard him. See characters of all theſe opera ſingers: *Muſical Tours*, and *Hiſt. of Muſic*, vol. iv.

long

long afflicted me? You have perhaps loſt all courage at the firſt repulſe? Has a ſlight contrary wind then made you run into port? No, my dear Gemello: ſuch little fortitude would never characterize you. With a fair wind, no one would ever have recourſe to the powers of Farinelli. It is from the difficulties of the enterpriſe, that it becomes worthy of his care. If the doors are not opened at the firſt attempt, they may perhaps at the ſecond. And it happens frequently, that he who reſiſts the firſt aſſault, at the ſecond, is vanquiſhed. Remember that you are combatting for your fellow twin, in a moſt juſt cauſe. And if it ſhould be gained, it would be no diſgrace in the eyes of Europe, either to thoſe who granted, or thoſe who ſolicited, the favour.

You will, perhaps, be curious to know how Caffariello has been received; and here follows the true hiſtory. The wonders related of him by his adherents, had excited expectations of ſomething above humanity; but the firſt night, he abſolutely diſpleaſed every body, and was moſt clearly and univerſally diſapproved. He ſaid that he was ſo oppreſſed and diſconcerted by the preſence of their Imperial Majeſties, that he could not

recover

recover himſelf; and indeed, in the ſubſequent repreſentations, he regained his credit ſo much, that ſome of the nobility and gentry now exalt him to the firmament, and even go ſo far as to make heretical compariſons. There are, however, innumerable critics, who find his voice ſtrong, but falſe, ſcreaming, and diſobedient; ſo that he can do nothing conſiderable without forcing it, and when forced, it becomes harſh and diſagreeable. They ſay that he has no judgment, and by frequently attempting what he is unable to execute, leaves it half finiſhed; that he has an old faſhioned and bad taſte, and pretend, that they can diſcover in his graces, the antique and ſtale flouriſhes of *Niccolini* and *Mateuccio*. They cry out, that no one ever trod the ſtage worſe; that in the recitatives he is an old nun; and in all he ſings, there conſtantly reigns a whimpering tone of lamentation, ſufficient to ſour the gaieſt allegro*. They allow that he can ſometimes pleaſe, even to exceſs; but ſay, that theſe happy moments are uncertain, and depend on the caprice of his voice and

* This, with reſpect to the tone of his voice, is exactly the effect which Marcheſi's firſt performance on the Engliſh ſtage, had on the writer of theſe memoirs.

diſpoſition,

diſpoſition, and do not make amends for what his imperfections oblige them to ſuffer. You will be pleaſed to obſerve, that I only cite, but do not decide: on the contrary, I proteſt to you, that I have all the eſteem for this performer, which he merits.

The diſgrace of the firſt night, the diverſity of opinions, and the little appearance there is of his having acquired the favour of our moſt auguſt patroneſs, a princeſs whom you know to be an exquiſite judge of muſic, have humbled him ſo extremely, that from his preſent modeſty and reſignation, you would not know him. If he continues in this diſpoſition, I hope he will acquire many of thoſe ſuffrages which were at firſt refuſed to him.

Our Counteſs of Althan, who during theſe occurrences, has a moſt lively remembrance of you, ſends you a thouſand ſalutations. And I, ſuſpending my choler, embrace you with my uſual, but ill returned affection.

Vienna, May 28, 1749.

Metaſtaſio more frequently complains of the tention of his nerves, and of hypochondriac affections, this year (1749) than at any other

other period of his life; and yet, in his letters, he has given frequent proofs of hilarity, particularly in writing to his firſt and conſtant patroneſs, the Princeſs di Belmonte. Two of theſe letters, not in the collection publiſhed at Nice, have been inſerted in Sig. Saverio Mattei's Memoirs of the poet.

The firſt contains an account of an earthquake that happened in Germany, in June 1749, which he deſcribes in the following manner.

"On Monday was ſevennight, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we were favoured with the unexpected viſit of an earthquake, an animal hardly known in theſe regions. The effects of this viſit were certainly not ſlight, as there is ſcarcely a ſingle perſon here who did not perceive it; and if the city has eſcaped from damage, the environs and the country have ſuffered conſiderably, by the appearance of great bodies of water, without knowing whence they came, and which have inundated conſiderable tracts of land. The motion was not, as uſual, undulatory, from ſide to ſide, but upwards and downwards, which will perhaps account for the little damage which the buildings ſuſtained. The principal ſhock was preceded

and

and followed by others, but much leſs violent. Your excellency will eaſily believe, that we are full of terrors; as indeed we well may, as this is one of the leaſt amuſing of all nature's ſports; and as it has happened in a country not at all uſed to compliments of this kind, it is natural that, beſides the uſual fear on ſuch occaſions, it ſhould have produced all the ſymptoms of a terrible ſurpriſe. You will take it for granted, that our churches are full, and our theatres empty; our muſicians idle, and our preachers fatigued; that we are covered with ſackcloth and aſhes, and, in ſhort, that Vienna reſembles Nineveh in penitence. But your excellence will now be pleaſed to obſerve, how poſſible it is, from good reaſoning, to draw falſe concluſions. Nothing of all this has happened. The theatres were never more frequented; the inhabitants more ſerene; or aſſemblies more chearful. We did indeed, for about two days, talk of this unexpected gueſt; but not more than we ſhould have done of a Rhinoceros, an Elephant, or any other ſtrange animal. At the time I am writing this letter, it is no longer ſpoken of: and the journey of Madamoiſelle *Taglia-vini*, the dancer, through this city, from

Italy to Dreſden, has inſtantly ſuperſeded all kind of mention of the earthquake in our converſation. Your Excellence will conclude, from this moſt faithful account, how much more quiet our conſciences are here, than elſewhere: and that nature has benignly furniſhed us with that fortitude and equanimity, without trouble, which, in other countries, is only to be acquired by a long and painful ſtudy of philoſophy. Nor is your Excellency to believe, that this heroiſm is granted here to none but the Germans: this hoſpitable climate communicates its privileges, even to foreigners: for I have obſerved the ſame firmneſs in all the Italians reſident in this city. So true it is, that cowardiſe is a diſorder which is caught by the mind, as the ſmall-pox or meazles by the body."

In a ſecond letter to the ſame princeſs, dated July the 5th, we have a very pleaſant and lively relation of a *Tweedle-dum* and *Tweedle-dee* quarrel, which had juſt happened in the Opera-houſe at Vienna.

"In exchange for the muſical news with which your Excellence has honoured me, concerning our amiable friend, *Monticelli*, I ſhall give you ſome military tidings of our valiant *Caffarelli*, who a few days ago, gave

public

public proofs of his being no leſs a votary of Mars, than of Apollo. For my misfortune, I was not preſent at theſe military feats: but the following is a moſt faithful narrative.

The Poet of this theatre, is a Milaneſe young man, deſcended from very worthy parents; but inconſiderate, a great admirer of the fair ſex, deſpiſing money, and not more rich in abilities, than deficient in judgment. To this young author, the managers of this theatre have confided, not only the ſettling the books of the words, but all the arrangements of the ſtage. I know not whether it proceeded from rivalry of talents, or perſonal beauty, but the poet and the ſinger, from the beginning, have been upon the *qui vive*, and treated each other with ſneers and ſarcaſms. At length, *Migliavacca* (the poet) iſſued out orders for a rehearſal of the opera that was preparing. All the performers obeyed the ſummons, except *Caffarelli*; whoſe abſence was occaſioned, either by a mutinous ſpirit, or an innate averſion to every ſpecies of obedience. However, at the end of the rehearſal, he appeared; and to the ſalutations of the company, in a very contemptuous and diſdainful manner, aſked, *What was the uſe of*

theſe rehearſals? The Coryphæus anſwered, in a voice of authority, that "No one was obliged to be accountable to him for what was doing; that he ought to be glad that his own failure of attendance had been ſuffered: that his preſence or his abſence would be of little utility to the ſucceſs of the opera; and though he did what he pleaſed himſelf, he ought, at leaſt, to let others do their duty." *Caffarelli* violently irritated at the air of authority which *Migliavacca* had aſſumed, politely interrupted him by ſaying, that "he who had ordered ſuch a rehearſal was a ſolemn coxcomb."—Here all the patience and dignity of the director left him; and ſuffering himſelf to be blindly tranſported from a poetical fury, to a more ignoble rage, he honoured the chanter with all thoſe glorious titles which *Caffarelli* had merited in different parts of Europe; and ſlightly touched, but in very lively colours, ſome of the moſt memorable tranſactions of his life; nor was he likely ſoon to come to a cloſe; but the hero of his panegyric, cutting the thread of his own praiſe, boldly cried out to the panegyriſt; "follow me, if thou haſt courage, to a place where there is no one to aſſiſt thee:" then moving towards

the

the door, beckoned him to come out. The perplexed and threatened poet remained a moment in doubt: then ſmiling, he ſays; "truly ſuch a rival as thee makes me bluſh: but come along! ſince the chaſtiſing madmen and fools is always a chriſtian work." And then advanced in order to take the field. But *Caffarelli* having either thought that the Muſes would not be ſo valiant, or that, according to the rules of the criminal law, a delinquent ought to be puniſhed *in loco patrati delicti*, changed his firſt reſolution of ſeeking another field of battle, and intrenching himſelf behind the door, drew his bright blade, and preſented the point to the enemy. Nor did the other refuſe the conteſt:

Ma fiero anch'egli il rilucente acciaro
Liberò dalla placida guarina.

But freeing from its peaceful ſcabbard, he
Fiercely the ſhining ſteel diſplays.

The ſpectators tremble: each calling on his titular ſaint; expecting every moment to ſee poetical and vocal blood ſmoke upon the harpſichords and double-baſes. Till, at length, the *Signora Teſi*, riſing from under her canopy, where, till now, ſhe had remained

mained a moſt tranquil ſpectator, walked gently, and in a ſtately ſtep, towards the combatants. When (Oh! ſovereign power of beauty!) the mad *Caffarelli*, in the moſt violent ebullition of his wrath, captivated and appeaſed, by this unexpected tenderneſs, meets her with rapture; throws away his ſword, or rather lays it at her feet; begs pardon for his error, generouſly ſacrificing to her his vengeance, and ſealing repeated proteſtations of obedience, reſpect, and humiliation, with a thouſand kiſſes impreſſed on the hand of the arbitreſs of his fury. The nymph ſignified forgiveneſs by a nod; the poet ſheathed his ſword; the ſpectators began to breathe; and to the joyous ſound of horſe-laughs, the tumultuous aſſembly was diſſolved. In collecting the numbers of the wounded and the ſlain, none was found but the poor copyiſt, who contracted, in trying to ſeparate the combatants, a ſmall contuſion in the clavicula of the foot, from an involuntary kick of *Migliavacca's* Pegaſus. The next day the battle was recorded in an anonymous ſonnet; and ſoon after, an anſwer was produced by the belligerant poet. I hope to procure a copy of both, to incloſe in this letter. To day the German com-

medians will repreſent this extraordinary event on the ſtage. They ſay, that already not a place is to be had for love or money, and it is not yet twelve o'clock. I ſhould be very glad to be one of the audience, if I were poſſeſſed of an inviſible ring.

LETTER III.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

I WAS meditating a ſatire in your praiſe, to revenge my ſufferings from your barbarous ſilence, when the Venetian ambaſſador ſent me your moſt affectionate letter of the 6th of May, written at Aranjues. I ought to conceal from you the aſcendant you have over my ſoul, and the rapidity with which your hand writing not only appeaſed my wrath, but repreſented to my mind the moſt minute circumſtances of your merit, againſt which I have no defence. Pray make no bad uſe of this confeſſion; be more humane in future; and do not rely too much on the ſweetneſs of my temper. There is no bitter ſo inſupportable, as that which ariſes from corrupted ſweetneſs. You remember the Neapolitan pumpkins, called *winter melons*:

while they are ſound, how nectareous! But the inſtant they begin to decay, how poiſonous! Suppoſe your Metaſtaſio to be one of them, take care that he is not ſpoiled, if you wiſh not to be poiſoned. Thank heaven! my picture has at length reached you. Oh how I envy its good fortune to be always in the company of my dear Gemello, while I am ſeparated from him by half Europe! I confeſs great obligations to the portrait, as it has procured to the original the approbation of thoſe moſt clement monarchs. The account you have given me, is ſufficient to turn the heads of all the hermits of the Thebaid; conſider then what effect it muſt have had upon the mind of a poor graſshopper of Parnaſſus, naturally vain, like the reſt of the poetical tribe. I never ceaſe, from morning to night, repeating to myſelf *Se le conoſce en la cara*, &c. *(f)*. What a prodigious fatigue is it not to believe all this, and tell it to the whole world! This glory I owe to you, conſider therefore how much I think myſelf obliged to you.

I am certain that Migliavacca is perfectly contented with the magnificent preſent

(f) A Neapolitan old ballad.

which

which you procured him, and believe he will never have ſuch another as long as he lives, nor one acquired with leſs fatigue. Indeed he only ſpoiled what I had ſketched out; and obliged me, for the credit of my interpoſition, and for your ſake, to new write the principal ſcenes; to help the feet of the limping ſongs, and, in ſhort, to give myſelf more trouble than if he had not written a ſingle verſe. It is, however, ſufficient, that, by dint of ſcolding and fretting, the piece is likely to have a good effect, if the perſon who performs the part of *Armida* is a good *Actrice*. I am unacquainted with the firſt woman, and therefore can form no prognoſtics. All I am certain of is, that the ſuperb preſent made to Migliavacca has afforded me much more pleaſure than I ſhould have experienced if you had procured me a Cardinal's cap. It afforded me a fine text to preach on through the court and city; and an opportunity of acquainting every body with the noble and generous way of thinking of my dear Farinelli, for which I love him ſtill more than for that excellence which ſets him at the head of all the tuneful hierarchy.

Would to heaven I could boaſt, my dear friend, that the nerves of my poor head correſponded with the placid countenance which the painter has been pleaſed to give to my portrait. This letter was begun the 19th, will be finiſhed, God willing, to-day, the 25th. When I apply with a little attention, the nerves of my ſenſorium are put into a violent tumult. I grow as red as a drunkard; and am obliged to quit my work, or heaven knows what might be the conſequence. Moſt people are deceived by appearances, which they do not believe; and my Imperial Miſtreſs has been, and perhaps is now, in the ſame error as yourſelf. However, in revenge for my not having written any thing during the laſt five years, though it was very much wiſhed, ſhe has increaſed my ſalary, a few weeks ago, 500 florins, annually, for which I never had the leaſt idea of ſoliciting. Think how much I muſt bluſh at finding myſelf ſo unable to manifeſt my gratitude for this Imperial bounty, which being ſpontaneous during ſuch an adverſe period as the preſent, is of infinitely more value, than much greater gifts, granted to ſolicitation in proſperous times. I have therefore determined to try the ſtrength

of

of my head this ſummer (if we are to have any, for we ſtill wear cloth clothes), and give a teſtimony to my ſovereign of my inclination, at leaſt, by ſome production, long, ſhort, good or bad, as it may happen.

From this too faithful account, my dear Gemello may judge what promiſe I am able to make, to furniſh the opera you wiſh for your court. If there is an individual in the world whom I wiſh to pleaſe, be aſſured that it is yourſelf. But how can I attempt it, while I am ſo deep in my ſovereign's debt for paſt indolence? If my complaints ſhould abate ſufficiently to enable me to write the compoſition I meditate, after duty is fulfilled, you will be my firſt thought. I ſwear it to you on the altar of friendſhip: a divinity invoked by all, though very little reſpected; yet I hope to convince you that my devotion is free from hypocriſy.

What a magnificent air is that which you have ſent me! If you had not confided to me, who was the author of it, I ſhould have diſcovered him by thoſe *Portamenti di voce*, which at preſent are no longer in faſhion among the bunglers of modern times. We have enjoyed this air many times, reaſonably well executed, in Althan Houſe;

but this balm is poiſoned, by reflecting upon the almoſt utter impoſſibility of our ever hearing it in its perfection, from the mouth of the maſter of maſters. Oh how much have the Counteſs Althan and all the company talked of you! And with how many commiſſions am I charged! Imagine to yourſelf expreſſions worthy of your merit; as the writing them would require a volume inſtead of a letter.

I perceive by your laſt, that you have not forgotten my Neapolitan affair; I am grateful to you for it. But our operations go on ſo ſlowly, that I cannot preſage much good. I foreſaw the difficulties we were likely to encounter, through all the juſtice of my cauſe; and if you were not the pilot of my veſſel, I ſhould give her over for loſt. But of this, enough at preſent; be not diſcouraged by the difficulties, and remember that you toil for your moſt faithful friend.

Vienna, June 19, 1749.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH I wrote you a long letter but a few days ago, I cannot refrain from embracing you again, in conſequence of letters which I have juſt received from Naples. Theſe letters inform me, that the difficulties concerning the reſtitution of my place are very great, on account of its having been ſold; but at the ſame time aſſure me, that the applications in my favour come from *crowned heads*. Hence I diſcover with what integrity of heart, and ardour of true friendſhip, you have worked for me. So that though no advantage ſhould ever be derived from it, I ſhall remember it during my whole life; and you will always remain the deareſt object of my reflections. In ſhort, my dear and admirable Charles, is not only the patriarch of the whole tuneful hierarchy, but the king of honeſt men, and model of true friends. God preſerve you, for the conſolation of thoſe who love you, and the confuſion of all thoſe who want the goodneſs of heart to imitate you!

That

That the court of Naples ſhould diſburſe the money to indemnify the purchaſer of the *Precettoria*, is a difficulty firſt couſin to impoſſibility; but in order to ſecond the benevolent zeal of your court, a compenſation might eaſily be found for the purchaſer, or for me. To me, for example, why, in a deſperate caſe, could not an *eccleſiaſtical* benefice be given, which coſts nothing? And if any one ſhould be vacant, and you think this expedient feaſible, pray make uſe of it according to your own diſcretion. If I ſhould again recommend this affair to you, I ſhould be the moſt ungrateful of mortals. You not only are no dealer in ſmoke, but work for me, even without taking to yourſelf the merit of informing me of it; and I hear from every one of your activity, except from yourſelf. Thoſe great perſonages who favour you, and think you ſo worthy of their affection, have good reaſon for what they do. Adieu, dear Gemello. If you were near me, you would read better in my face, than in my letter, the tranſport of affection and gratitude which this new teſtimony of your kindneſs has impreſſed on my mind; a tranſport, however, which does not depend on the

ſucceſs

ſucceſs of the enterpriſe, but on your ſincere, friendly, and generous activity.

Vienna, June 27, 1749.

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

THE rapturous gratitude and affection which overflowed in my laſt letter, concerning the news which I had received from Naples, did not allow me tranquillity to tranſcribe the Cantata which I now incloſe. Your manner of acting appeared to me ſo generous and uncommon, that I could think of nothing elſe. The general practice is to promiſe much, and do very little; but you do a great deal, and ſay nothing. So that my intelligence of the kind offices which you perform for me in Spain, comes from Naples. In ſhort, there is but one Farinelli. I am proud to find that the irriſiſtible inclination which I always felt to attach myſelf to you, is ſo reaſonable. I wiſh you to believe, that whatever may be the termination of this buſineſs, my gratitude will ever remain the ſame: for you have convinced me, that if it were in your power to elect me Pope, I might already begin to grant Indulgencies:

Indulgencies: and this is ſufficient to bind the heart and affection of an honeſt man. Succeſs does not depend on ourſelves.

I incloſe two Cantatas: the firſt for two voices, conſiſting of recitative, with two airs for graceful muſic, and a very tender duet. The interlocutors are an affectionate nymph, and a ſhepherd naturally jealous; and I ſhould hope, that ſeaſoned by your notes, and executed to your ſatisfaction, it might have an effect. The other is a Cantata for a ſingle voice, in a more chearful ſtyle. An ingenuous man ſpeaks in it to a little nymph of the bird kind, who wiſhes to entangle him; which he does not perceive. If you knew the original, the copy would not diſpleaſe you. But ſuch originals abound every where; and you will find ſome of them at Madrid. The recitative is very long; but the force of the cantata lies only in the recitative. If it will ſerve you for no other purpoſe, divert yourſelf with reading it. As neither this nor the other has yet been publiſhed, that circumſtance will, perhaps, give them ſome value, if they can boaſt of no other.

I muſt inform you, that I ſing your air like a ſeraph: Count Anthony of Althan

plays

plays the firſt violin; the other performers are unknown to you. But, my good maſter, you muſt not laugh at us, as, by the confeſſion of many, we do you very great honour: ſo ſpare your ridicule, I entreat you.

But *à propos* to ridicule, I believe I committed a great blunder in my laſt letter. It ſeems as if I ſaid, that in a deſperate caſe, if the place could not be reſtored, an equivalent might be ſolicited in an *eccleſiaſtical benefice, which would coſt the royal treaſury nothing*: now I ought to have ſaid, an *eccleſiaſtical penſion*, and not a benefice. As, I believe, to be qualified for a benefice, the candidate ſhould be a native, though not for a penſion. But theſe are only hints for a deſperate caſe, to which, with your ſupport, I hope we ſhall never be driven. For by accounts from Naples, as I find the tree was ſhook by the firſt blow it received from you, it is to be hoped that, by another little ſtroke, it will fall. But I have already teazed you too much on this ſubject. Adieu.

Vienna, July 9, 1749.

The next letter to Farinelli dwells on a long, and now unintereſting diſcuſſion of his

his Neapolitan claims, and is ended in the following manner.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

I BEGAN a little drama, to pleaſe my auguſt Miſtreſs, but have been obliged to diſcontinue it. My head ſuffers cruelly from the ſlighteſt exerciſe of intellect. It is a barbarous thing, my dear friend, and ſtill more barbarous, as it is difficult to be believed. However, I ſhall try again, as I am aſhamed of my inactivity, though involuntary. I beg you to believe firmly that, next to my patroneſs, to whom my firſt duty is due, I ſhall place my dear Gemello before all the monarchs upon earth. From the courts of Turin and Dreſden, beſides many other places of leſs conſequence, I have been aſſailed with offers innumerable; but life is a *fardle, number one.* And we muſt preſerve it as long as God pleaſes. The ſum total of all this is, that if I am able to work for any one except my patroneſs, it will be for you. Though you have not promiſed to take care of my Neapolitan buſineſs, I know it will not

not be forgotton, and I am already as much indebted to you as if it was happily finiſhed. I know that twins only labour with ſuch zeal and efficacy as you have done.

I ſhould not diſcontinue writing, but it is late, and I am tired. All ſalutations are returned to you, and I embrace you with my accuſtomed affection.

Vienna, Auguſt 16, 1749.

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

I WAS juſt in the act of pulling on my boots for my uſual journey into Moravia, at this time of the year, when your moſt delightful letter from Madrid, of the 29th of July, was brought to me; but the poſtilion waits, and I cannot let him depart without an anſwer for my deareſt Charles. I ſhould ſeem to travel with a ſting in my conſcience, which would let me have no peace during the whole journey; and with ſuch a ſin on my back, God knows how many ſpokes may be broken, how often I may be overturned, how many horſes may become reſtiff, or how many drunken poſtilions

tilions may rob me of all patience. No, no, let us avoid all danger.

I feel at this very time, that a cheſt of Vanilla chocolate, ſnuff, and bark, tributes which India furniſhes to Spain, and your great heart to me, are under ſail. By the gift I judge of the donor. My palate flattered with ſuch delicious beverage, my noſe ſo delightfully tickled, my veins furniſhed with ſuch guards againſt all irregular effervescence of the blood, and every other member of my very frail little frame, through envy or pleaſure, are all in ſuch a tumult of gratitude, as to proteſt that all their motions ſhall be regulated in future by the nod of their generous benefactor. You who are a great algebraiſt, calculate yourſelf, in the firſt place, how much I love and eſteem you; then how dear every thing is that comes from you, though in itſelf indifferent; afterwards, find out how much I am delighted with every new teſtimony of your affection; and, finally, the intrinſic value of the gift; ſum up all theſe together, and then, if arithmetic can go ſo far, give me the product.

But alas! my very ſhort acknowledgements appear already too prolix to your vir-

gin modeſty; you already bluſh, grow impatient and angry, but I laugh at all this; and ſee you are already appeaſed.

What is the beautiful Caſtellini doing; and is it true that, ſhe is ſo pleaſed with my ſalutations? that ſhe means to honour me with her correſpondence? Ah! if you love me, let not my friendſhip be put to ſo great a trial. After the alluring deſcription which you have given of this amiable perſon, the violent temptation of a letter would precipitate me into the commiſſion of ſome mental infidelity, for which I ſhould be inconſolable. Tell her, however, that, as a twin, I can only receive the emotions of your heart at the rebound; that when I hear your name, I feel a certain tingling ſenſation which incommodes me, and yet I have no wiſh that it ſhould be diſcontinued; that if the Manzanare was not ſo diſtant from the Danube, I ſhould have come to try whether ſhe would receive me with open arms, as ſhe does my ſalutations; and tell her——No Sir, tell her nothing. The road is too ſlippery, and it is eaſier to keep out of it, than, when entered, to avoid falling.

I would not have you imagine, that my journey into the country will occaſion the

leaſt prejudice to the affairs of Sig. Rodolfo. I leave them in the hands of a zealous agent, and moſt amiable friend, who is on the watch, and ready to write to me, if any material occurrence ſhould happen. It is unlucky that the Emperor is continually moving about from place to place: now in Hungary, now in Moravia, now in the chace, now encamped, or at the Baths. During theſe laſt two months, he has not been four days in his palace in this neighbourhood. When he is ſtationary there, at this time of the year, he is three miles diſtant from the city, and the poor agents are forced to run many times after him, before they can catch him flying.

I thank you for your categorical anſwer to Mademoiſelle Mattei, I have had it read to the perſon who gave me the commiſſion, and that's all I wanted.

The poſtilion ſounds his horn, and I muſt conclude. All who know that I am writing to you, beg to be remembered; but I am not in a humour to write all their names. Our dear Counteſs of Althan muſt, however, not be omitted, who is as partial to you as ever.

Vienna, September 6, 1749.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

BEHOLD me again at Vienna; where I have to anſwer your two letters of the 23d, and 30th of September. But the chapters are different, and muſt be ſeparated; let us begin with the moſt eaſy.

I ordered, even from the country, Migliavacca to have the *Licenza* ready for you, whenever it might be wanted. On my return hither, I immediately ſent for him, and on Saturday morning made him read, correct what he had done, and incloſe the *Licenza* you requeſted in a letter, with my affectionate ſalutations, and an aſſurance that I only poſtponed writing myſelf, till Wedneſday, when I hoped to have it in my power to ſay ſomething poſitive to you concerning Cavalli. Yeſterday I was informed that Migliavacca, in coming from the opera, was ſuddenly attacked in his way home; received two violent wounds in his head, by perſons unknown, and that, as yet, there was no determining what would be the conſequence,

Not being the moſt exact commiſſary in the world, God knows whether he had written the letter and ſent away the *Licenza*, as I had deſired him, previous to this event. In his preſent ſtate, it would ſeem devoid of all chriſtian charity to diſturb him about this buſineſs: I have therefore tried to recollect the *Licenza*, have read it over and over again, chewed it, and really believe that I have recovered every line. I have tranſcribed and encloſed it, that it may arrive in time.—But behold! Here comes a perſon who informs me, that laſt night Migliavacca was at the theatre! A proof that the wounds were not very ſerious; they will I hope however ſerve as correctives.

Now I have room, and have written ſo little, I ſhall add a few words, as an advertiſement, not a recommendation. Know then, that a Neapolitan Maeſtro di Capella of the name of JOMELLI, has ſet two of my operas here. He is about thirty-five years of age, of a ſpherical figure (*g*), pacific diſpoſition, with an engaging countenance, moſt pleaſing manners, and excellent morals. He has ſurpriſed me. I have found in him all the harmony of Haſſe, with all the

(*g*) Jomelli was remarkably corpulent.

grace,

grace, expreſſion, and invention of Vinci. At preſent he is gone to Venice, to bring on the ſtage my *Ciro*, and returns immediately to Vienna, to do the ſame piece of ſervice to *Didone*. Beſides this, he is engaged to compoſe two operas for our theatre, next year. You will certainly hear of him from other quarters; but I wiſh you to know my opinion of him. It appears to me, as if *he wiſhed to be heard in Spain*; if that ſhould ever happen, I am certain he would do you honour. You will conſider whether it will be expedient to engage him for one year or two. Beſides the operas which he entirely new ſets, he will make no difficulty of accommodating whatever old operas you pleaſe; and if you thought it more convenient that he ſhould compoſe at home, and ſend you his productions, as was done by Leo, he will be equally ready to join iſſue with you. In ſhort, he is made of a paſte to which you may give whatever form you pleaſe. Make uſe of this information, which, however, *is no recommendation*, and requires no oſtenſible anſwer.

Adieu my dear Gemello; I can write no more to day. Love me, and believe me obſtinately yours.

Vienna, November 12, 1749.

The Licenza mentioned by Metaſtaſio in this letter, is printed at the end of it, though not in his works. It is a kind of complimentary Epilogue to the Opera of Armida, performed before the king and queen of Spain, at the court of Madrid. The interlocutors are, Apollo, and the Muſes. The God chides his daughters for trifling away their time in talking about Armida, while the virtues of their beſt friends, the Sovereigns of Manzanare, remain unſung.

LETTER IX.

TO FARINELLI.

You were ſo angry with the monaſtic reſidence, called a country ſeat, where you had caught your ſore throat, when you wrote your laſt letter to me, that you neither named the year, day, nor place, in which it was written. God ſend the ſame thing may not happen in directing your next letter to me; as I may then expect it till the day of judgment, without its ever coming to my hands.

I am extremely impatient to hear, that your throat is in *priſtinum*; and hope you will not

not retard the news, but relieve my mind from its ſolicitude on that account, as ſoon as poſſible. But my dear Gemello, though I own it to be a very troubleſome complaint, and pity you ſincerely; yet, to confeſs the truth, (under favour) it is but fair that *per quæ quis peccat, per hæc & puniatur*, that the peccant part ſhould ſuffer. God knows how many ſins the witchcraft of your throat has occaſioned; therefore a little caſtigation of that part may not be amiſs.

By to day's poſt, I have advice, that the cheſt of ſnuff is arrived at *Trieſte*. My noſe is in the greateſt impatience.

The wax-faced Teſi wiſhes to have a certain *Ranieri Collin* ſecretary to the Abate Vernaccini, recommended to you, and wants me to do the buſineſs. It is ſufficient that you acknowledge I have written to you about him; however, I am very little acquainted with him.

Count Nicolas Eſterhaſi, who will be our Ambaſſador at your court, calls himſelf your friend, and wiſhes me to ſend compliments to you in his name; and to ſay, among other things, that he is very impatient to embrace you.

If I had more room, I would ſend you a long Litany of ſalutations, but that not being the caſe, content yourſelf with thoſe of the Counteſs d'Althan.

Vienna, December 3, 1749.

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

By working for you in verſe, I ſhall have no time to-day, for writing to you in proſe. Here is the poem you wiſhed, with the ſupplement. I ſhould have attempted this for none but my dear Gemello. The thing is not ſo eaſy as you imagine. It is not ſufficient that an additional part ſhould be good in itſelf, it ſhould be ſo adapted as to fit the place, otherwiſe it is a wen upon a production that was conceived without it. Be that as it may, the buſineſs is done, and if well repreſented, may have an effect. I have not had time even to tranſcribe it. God knows whether you will be able to decipher my original ſketch. With more leiſure it might perhaps have been better; but, at preſent, you muſt content yourſelf, however deficient you may find it.

The

The pleaſure I felt at your recovering from the terrible ſore throat with which you were afflicted, made me ſwallow the pill without making faces. It is a great conſolation to me to perceive, by your letter, the tranquil ſtate of your mind; a proof that the machine is in order, which I wiſh indiſſoluble. I have made a good uſe of the information you gave me, concerning the flattering remembrance of your moſt gracious ſovereign. I have ſpread it about the court, and it is talked of every where! Good God! why has not it been always the ſame!

The ſnuff is not yet arrived; but according to the advice I have received, it cannot be far from Vienna. You ſhall be informed the inſtant I get ſcent of it.

I wiſh you joy of the muſic of Buranello, who, according to what I have heard, will be a good compoſer for violins, violoncellos, and for ſingers; but a very bad workman for poets. He thinks as much about the words when he is ſetting them, as you of being elected Pope; and if he did think of them, I am not ſure he would do better. He abounds in ideas, though not always his own, nor well connected together. In ſhort, he is not my Apoſtle. I ſpeak with ſincerity

cerity to my dear Gemello, but in public, I leave him in that ſtate of credit in which he is held by thoſe who judge with the ear, and not the underſtanding.

Vienna, December 27, 1749.

This is a very ſevere cenſure of that ſpirited and fanciful compoſer, *Galuppi detto Buranello*. But though Buranello's Pegaſus, in the year 1749, was wild and ungovernable, he lived long enough to break and bring him into order. This compoſer, in his younger days, wrote with a rapidity which allowed him little leiſure for attending to words, or indeed to the ſtrict rules of counterpoint; but continuing to compoſe upwards of thirty years after this period, he produced works both for the church and ſtage, which, in ſpite of the tranſient ſtate of muſical fame, will long be admired by true judges of the art. Galuppi died at Venice, 1782, at 85. See *Hiſt. Muſic*, vol iv.

END OF THE SIXTH SECTION.

SECTION VII.

HAVING preſented the reader with all the letters which the poet wrote to his friend Farinelli during the year 1749, a retroſpect muſt be taken of thoſe to his other correſpondents during the ſame year. And the firſt which has been hitherto unnoticed, is addreſſed to an author of an oratorio, to which a Bologneſe printer had affixed the name of Metaſtaſio.

LETTER I.

TO SIG. D. LUIGI LOCATELLI, AT GENOA.

THERE is no reſentment, Sir, more juſt, than that which you ſeem to feel at finding yourſelf defrauded of the glory juſtly due to your own labours, nor undertaking more laudable, than that of reclaiming it. It is not only mine, but the common intereſt of every writer, to take an active part in your favour.

favour. I therefore am moſt ready to publiſh as often as you pleaſe, that I had no kind of ſhare in the writing, or conception of the drama called *La Via della croce*, to which as you have been pleaſed to inform me, my name has been ſet by the Bologneſe printer. I am ſo little to blame for this robbery, that having been totally ignorant of it till now, I am wholly exempt even from the complacence into which the miſtake that does me honour, might have ſeduced me. I am, however, obliged to him who has thus procured me your friendſhip, though by an oblique road. And beg of you to furniſh me with frequent occaſions of meriting that honour, and to believe me to be, &c.

Vienna, March 20, 1749.

Metaſtaſio, in ſorting his papers many years after, found a copy of this letter; and in order to authenticate it, gave teſtimony on the back with his own hand, that it was genuine, ſigning it PIETRO METASTASIO.

Vienna, June 26, 1755.

The next letters, written in 1749, of which the notice has been hitherto poſtponed,

poned, in order to avoid breaking the chain of his correſpondence with Farinelli, are the following.

LETTER II.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE, AT NAPLES.

I PERCEIVE, by your moſt reſpected letter of the 14th of July, that you regard the ſlow arrival at ratiocination among the people who reſide within the Arctic Circle, as a diſadvantage. But I, (begging your pardon) regard it as one of the greateſt bleſſings which providence can grant to us poor mortals, and am unable to ſay what I would not give to be poſſeſſed of a ſuperior degree of ſtupidity. Of what uſe is this perſpicacious celerity of combination? Perhaps to foreſee the future? Oh what vanity! In ſo many years painful experience, I have diſcovered, to my ſhame, that in reaſoning upon the events of this world in the moſt accurate manner I was able, I have deduced the moſt falſe conſequences. For ſo numerous and uncertain are the poſſible contingences, that it is utterly impoſſible for the human

human mind to ſee them all: and one ſingle circumſtance omitted, in laying the foundation of our reaſoning, ruins the whole edifice. You know that if a line deviates one ſingle point from its parallel, it becomes more diſtant the further it is extended. Hence I ſeem much more inclined to laugh at the predictions deduced from the reaſoning of our modern Ariſtotles, than at the dreams of the Abate Joachim (*b*) or the viſions of Noſtradamus (*i*).

A ſhort apologue of a Greek poet, ſeemingly puerile, but of very ſerious uſe in reality, exhibits clearly to our view, both the fallacy and miſchief of our reaſoning faculty. And being very ſhort, it may help to fill up the vacuity of this letter.

He ſays, that human ſouls, when condemned to animate our bodies, come forth from their tranquil habitation at a door which has a vaſe on each ſide; in the one is

(*b*) A viſionary Theologian of the twelfth century, whoſe reveries were condemned by ſubſequent councils.

(*i*) A celebrated Aſtrologer and Fortune-teller of the ſixteenth century, whoſe wild predictions were not only believed by the credulous multitude, but ſought and reſpected by moſt of the princes of his time. It was the younger brother of this Charlatan who wrote the lives of the ancient Provençal bards, publiſhed at Lyons, 1575.

continued

contained the ſweet, and in the other the bitter, which renders life happy or miſerable. The new traveller is obliged, by the laws of fate, to ſtop at going out, and taſte of both theſe vaſes, without knowing their contents; but may drink much or little, juſt as he pleaſes. Now as all are poſſeſſed with a peſtilent rage for divining by the force of reaſon, ſee what are the conſequences.

The ſoul which ſtops firſt to taſte of the ſweet vaſe, conjectures that the contents of the other muſt be the ſame, and eager to double his pleaſure, takes a greater gulp of the bitter, but finds himſelf deceived. The ſoul that ſtops firſt at the bitter vaſe, by the ſame falſe reaſoning, ſuppoſing he ſhall diminiſh diſguſt, takes the ſmalleſt quantity poſſible of the ſweet, and is equally deceived. Hence it is, ſays the poet, that in the whole courſe of our lives, the ſweet is ſo much leſs than the bitter (*k*).

But ſhould the reaſoning faculty be granted to human pride, if the power of directing the courſe of events is not likewiſe granted, it would be of no other uſe than to make us wretched. No axiom is more demonſtrable

(*k*) See Homer's Iliad, Book xxiv.

than

than that in this valley of tears our pains are far more numerous than our pleaſures. And that our imaginary evils are infinitely more terrible than the real. A poet with whom I have ſome ſlight acquaintance, among his papers, not yet publiſhed, illuſtrates the truth of this ſentiment, in the following manner.

Sempre e maggior del vero
L'Idea della ſventura,
Al credulo penſiero
Depinta dal timor
Chi ſtolta il mal figura
Affretta il proprio affanno;
Ed aſſicura un danno.
Quando e' dubbioſo ancor (*l*).

Ideal evil, when deſign'd,
And colour'd by the artiſt fear,
Can more than real, rack mankind,
And gen'rate ſufferings more ſevere.

Mortals who fancied woes explore
Misfortuné but anticipate,
And render certain, what before
Was doubtful and unfixt by fate.

And if your excellence tells me, that by foreſeeing misfortunes, and making a good uſe of free-will, we may avoid them; I ſhall anſwer, that this power is limited to our own

(*l*) *Attilio Regolo*, atto 1om. ſc. 11. not publiſhed when this letter was written.

little frames, and does not extend beyond them. Whatever free-agency I may boaſt, it is not in my power to prevent the ruin of a kingdom which I may wiſh proſperous, the diſgrace of a friend whom I may wiſh happy, or the infidelity of a nymph whom I ſhould wiſh to be conſtant. So that after the moſt ſubtle arguments, reaſoning, combinations, and ſyſtems; after having extracted from the brain, the memory of things paſt; after totally forgetting the preſent in purſuing the future, we at length, in ſpite of the ridiculous privilege of tormenting ourſelves, find that we are plunged into the ſame inconvenience in which we ſhould have been, if we had remained quiet, and let things take their courſe. What then remains for us, but to have recourſe to that enviable indolence which is produced by ſtoical arrogance? And what, except the Syllogiſms of Seneca and Epictetus, have theſe fortunate people to ſupport them in their placid apathy?—Softly, ſoftly, good Sig. Abate, you gallop without a bridle; your argument proves too much, and precipitates you into abſurdity without your perceiving it. For, according to you, the life of an oyſter or a tortoiſe would be infinitely

preferable to ours.—I beg my life at your Excellency's fair hands. You deſtroy my arguments without mercy. If I ſhould for a moment, loſe my hold, you would draw me into hereſy whether I would or no. Let us go on fair and ſoftly. In the firſt place, I wiſh you to be convinced, that I have never forgot the diſadvantage the tortoiſe and oyſter lie under, from not having been baptized, and that this misfortune alone renders all theſe advantages unworthy of the leaſt conſideration. In the next place, I muſt beg of you to remember, that our diſpute is not whether brutes are more happy than reaſonable creatures, but whether thoſe of the laſt mentioned claſs are moſt happy who think but little, or thoſe who think too much. Therefore I muſt beg of your Excellency not to turn the tables upon me, unfairly; and I ſhall own that this abſurdity has not appeared equally ſtrong in all, particularly among thoſe who had the diſgrace to be born before the Temple of Janus was ſhut by Octavius Auguſtus; for then it would not have been difficult to prove, that the tranquil ſtupidity of an oyſter or tortoiſe would be preferable to the tormenting vivacity of Pythagoras or Plato. But I ſhall not

peremptorily aſſert this from my own imagination, but give you chapter and verſe.

A celebrated Florentine writer, called Giovanni Battiſta Gelli, who did great honour to his country two centuries ago, printed annals of the court of Circe, which are very much to our purpoſe. This illuſtrious inveſtigator of remote antiquity, relates, that Ulyſſes, after the deſtruction of Troy, having remained ſometime at the court of Circe, both as her lover and her priſoner; in ſpite of all the allurements of that enchanting abode, could not refrain from perpetually meditating his eſcape to his little kingdom of Ithaca, in a miſerable Iſland of the Ionia Sea, but to which he was extremely partial from its being his native country; and finding from the caution and vigilance of his jealous guardian, that all his wiles and ſtratagems were vainly practiſed in trying to procure his liberty, he determined to vanquiſh her by open force. But while he was waiting for a favourable opportunity to put this deſign in execution, I know not in what circumſtances it happened, but he one day ſo well availed himſelf of moments of exceſſive tenderneſs, that the fond enchantreſs unable to reſiſt him, promiſed by

one of thoſe oaths ſo terrible to the gods of Homer, to grant him leave of abſence for a limited time; and the artful Ulyſſes taking advantage of her weakneſs, while off her guard, puſhed his victory ſo far as to aſk permiſſion to take with him into Greece at leaſt two of his numerous companions, who being transformed into brutes of various kinds wandered about the country; and not only two were conceded to him, but all thoſe who were willing to follow him and reſume the human form. The ſubtle Greek certain that nothing would be denied to him, went on requeſting that the loſt faculty of ſpeech ſhould be reſtored to his companions, that he might explain to them her propoſition, and obtained it. Oh how fertile, for our diſgrace, did that ſcandalous example become of allowing brutes to ſpeak! But we ſhall not interrupt our narrative with reflections. Ulyſſes continues the Author, proud of his triumph, and more than certain of not leaving one of his companions with the enchantreſs, impatient to perfect his great work, tore himſelf as ſoon as poſſible from her arms. The firſt he happened to meet with, in quitting the enchanted palace, was one of thoſe elegant animals ſo

unjuſtly abhorred by the elect people, whoſe chief delight was to wallow in the mire, neither aſleep nor awake.

Ulyſſes in ſpying him at a diſtance, called out to him, and enquired whether he was one of his companions. He ſlowly lifted up his ſnout, but not at the firſt ſound of the voice, and as if impatient to get rid of importunity, in a moſt dry Spartan ſtyle, articulated, or rather grunted, in no very diſtinct manner, his name and country.

Oh my dear friend, exclaimed Ulyſſes, in diſcovering who he was, return thanks to the Gods: thy miſeries are at an end, to day we ſhall both ſet ſail together for Greece. What! why muſt we ſet ſail? cries the frightened brute; to whom Ulyſſes briefly diſcovered the favour he had obtained from Circe for himſelf and for ſome of his companions who were willing to follow him. The transformed Greek, comforted to hear that the going or ſtaying depended upon his own choice, civilly wiſhed his leader a good voyage. But he, not believing that his countryman was in earneſt, aſked him if he joked? I ſhould joke indeed, cries the other, if I ſaid that I conſented to return with thee; and canſt thou believe Ulyſſes, that I would

voluntarily abandon ſo ſweet and tranquil an abode, and the peaceful company of my innocent peers, to plunge myſelf a-new into the wretchedneſs of humanity, in order to live conſtantly in fear of ſuch cunning and miſchievous beings as thyſelf? Try to deceive ſomebody elſe, I am not ſuch a fool. Then rolling on the other ſide, politely turned his back on the deſtroyer of Troy, and without honouring him with any other anſwer, left him to prate at his leiſure. Figure to yourſelf the ſurpriſe and fury of Ulyſſes; he poured on him a torrent of the moſt eloquent abuſe, not omitting one of Ariſtophanes's licentious expreſſions, nor did he diſcontinue railing, but to propoſe the voyage in vain to a bear, whoſe curioſity was excited by the noiſe of the debate. Not diſcouraged by this ſecond failure, his third trial was upon a horſe, and his fourth upon a ſtag, but with no better ſucceſs. In ſhort, to abridge our legend, after having in vain traverſed over and over again the whole neighbourhood; after having finiſhed his ſpeech with more art and vigour than that which he made when he had clandeſtinely poſſeſſed himſelf of the arms of Achilles, hoarſe, breathleſs, fatigued, and enraged,

he

he at length returned to Circe, without having prevailed on any among all his companions to return with him, except one, and that was an elephant.

Now what will your Excellency ſay to this fine fragment of hiſtory? It is no poetical fiction, as you may perhaps ſuppoſe. The proofs of ancient monuments are indiſputable. It is an authentic volume of the Memoirs of Circe, excavated in digging at the foot of the Circean mountain; and, beſides the medals and citations which the Marquis Maffei will ſoon publiſh, we ſhall ere long have the fact amply detailed and communicated in Tuſcan characters. Hence the narrative is moſt certain.

What ſeems to me ſtill more certain, my dear Abate, you will ſay, is, that you are a moſt tireſome creature, and fit only to prate with ſilly women. Oh that is but too true, and I plead guilty. The worſt is, that this new inclination for goſſipping is one of the many painful ſymptoms, which convince me that I grow old. I ought certainly to correct myſelf to-day, and throw this letter into the fire inſtead of ſending it to the poſt. But on reflection, it appears to me, that if I am culpable, your Excellency is not quite

innocent. The exceſſive praiſes beſtowed by you upon my former letters, have not a little contributed to the length of this; therefore receive it as a ſlight, but juſt puniſhment, for the little charity with which you have inflamed the vanity of a poor poet. To-night will be repreſented, in this theatre, for the firſt time, *Achilles in Sciros*. The muſic of Jomelli, at the rehearſal, has far exceeded the great expectations that were formed of it.

Vienna, Auguſt 30, 1749.

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME PRINCESS.

YOUR moſt reſpected letter of Sept. 22d, found me in Moravia, where, with a military air, I ramble about, exerciſing the patience of the hares and pheaſants, of which the abundance will not indeed be much diminiſhed by my dexterity; they being much more frightened than hurt by me (*m*). We

(*m*) A noble Peer, who is ſtill living, after firing at a Norfolk covey of eight or ten brace of partridges, on ſeeing none fall, uſed to cry out: "yes, you *may* go, but you *have* it."

have

have hitherto had the moſt ſmiling ſeaſon, both here and in the reſt of Germany, that can be imagined; but within theſe four days, the Teutonic winter has unexpectedly appeared with all his magnificent train, and without the leaſt precurſor to announce his arrival. All is covered with ſnow. The rivers as well as lakes were inſtantly frozen in a moſt ſolid manner; and the cold blown from the ſeven neighbouring hills, is ſo ſubtil and penetrating, that we cannot exclude it from our warmeſt apartments. But notwithſtanding all this unforeſeen and violent change of nature, I ſtill find much amuſement here, having been more formed for Arcadian tranquillity than the buſtle and magnificence of courts. I am pleaſed with the ſilent concord of all exiſtence; the roving about in ſearch of well-known paths, fields, buſhes, paſtoral bowers, and every known object of which, though the fall of ſnow has changed the colouring, yet the deſign is ſtill reſpectfully preſerved. I reflect, with ſentiments of gratitude, that the friendly foreſt which, by its ſhade, but lately defended me from the burning rays of the ſun, now affords me materials for combating the extreme fury of the ſeaſon. I laugh at winter with all its horrors,

which

which I ſee without feeling; having it in our power to compoſe an artificial ſpring in our apartments at pleaſure; but by an impulſe of ſelf-love, what pleaſes me moſt, is the finding out that, compared with other ſeaſons, winter has ſtill its conveniences, beauties, and advantages.

In returning to Vienna, which will be very ſoon, I ſhall take by the hand my poetics, in order to ſee whether I had left them in a ſtate fit to be ſeen, or whether I muſt have recourſe to new careſſes.

Joſlowitz, Oct. 23, 1749.

In the ſummer of this year, before he quitted Vienna in order to viſit the Counteſs D'Althan, at her country ſeat in Moravia, Metaſtaſio received a letter from the admirable Haſſe, the compoſer, requeſting his inſtructions in ſetting to muſic his opera of *Attilio Regolo*, for the court of Dreſden (*n*). And his Anſwer may ſerve as a uſeful leſſon to future compoſers of this drama, and in-

(*n*) This was the opera that was written in 1740, for the Emperor Charles VI's. birth-day; but that Prince dying before it was brought on the ſtage, no uſe was made of it, till the period mentioned in the following letter.

deed

deed furniſh many valuable hints to compoſers of operas in general.

LETTER IV.

To Sig. Adolfo Hasse, the celebrated Profeſſor of Muſic, *detto il Saſſone* (called the Saxon), concerning the Opera of Attilio Regolo.

My dear Monſieur Haſſe has never been abſent from my heart ſince I quitted Vienna; but, hitherto, I have not been able to devote myſelf to your ſervice, becauſe in this moſt idle buſtle I am hardly my own maſter when I ſleep. So fully am I engaged in walking, ſhooting, muſic, cards, and converſation, that not a moment remains for private meditation, without defrauding ſociety. Yet, in ſpite of all theſe impediments, I am penetrated with ſuch remorſe for having ſo long neglected you, that I am now determined to obey your commands. But what can I poſſibly ſuggeſt to you, which has not already occurred to your own mind? After ſo many illuſtrious proofs of knowledge, judgment, grace, expreſſion, invention,

vention, and ingenuity, with which you only have been able to diſpute the palm of harmonic primacy with our nation: after having breathed with your ſeducing notes into ſo many poetical compoſitions that life and ſoul which the authors themſelves were unable to furniſh or imagine, what light, advertiſement, or inſtruction, can you expect me to furniſh? If I were only to mention things with which you are *not* acquainted, my letter would already be finiſhed; but if you wiſh me to converſe with you, God knows when I ſhould have done.

And now, as *Attilio Regolo* is to be the ſubject of my letter, I ſhall begin by developing the characters, which, perhaps, are not expreſſed in ſo lively a manner in the piece, as I had conceived them in my mind.

In *Regulus*, it has been my intention to delineate the character of a Roman hero of conſummate virtue, according to the Pagan idea, not only in principle, but practice; whoſe fortitude has been long tried, and is proof againſt every caprice of fortune. A rigid and ſcrupulous obſerver, as well of juſtice and probity, as of the laws and cuſtoms which time and the great authority of

his

his anceſtors have rendered ſacred to his country. Senſible to all the gentler paſſions of humanity, but ſuperior to each. A great commander, good citizen, and an affectionate father; but never conſidering theſe characters as diſtinct from his country, or otherwiſe among the bleſſings or evils of life, than as they eventually contribute to the welfare or injury to that whole of which he conſidered himſelf as a part. A great friend to glory, but regarding it merely as a reward to which individuals ſhould aſpire, by ſacrificing their own intereſt and happineſs to public utility.

With theſe internal qualities, I attribute to my prototype a mageſtic exterior, without pomp; reflecting, but ſerene; authoritative, but humane; equal, conſiderate, and compoſed. I ſhould not like that his voice or geſtures ſhould be violent, except in two or three ſituations of the opera, in which a ſenſible deviation from the conſtant tenor of his ſubſequent conduct, would exalt his ruling paſſions, which are patriotiſm and glory. You muſt not be alarmed, my dear Sir, I ſhall be much ſhorter in the deſcription of the other characters.

In

In the perſonage of the Conſul, *Manlius*, I have tried to repreſent one of thoſe great men, who, in the midſt of every civil and military virtue, ſuffer themſelves to be carried away by the rage of emulation, beyond all warrantable bounds. I wiſh this rivality to be ſtrongly marked, as well as his hoſtile diſpoſition of mind towards Regulus. Theſe will appear in the firſt ſcene with *Attilia*, as well as in the beginning of the next, in which the Senate hears Regulus, and the Carthaginian Ambaſſadors. His ſubſequent change of ſentiment into reſpect and tenderneſs for Regulus, will render his character more admirable, and more pleaſing; it will exalt the virtue of Regulus, by demonſtrating its efficacy in producing ſuch ſtupendous effects, and will add to the ſecond ſcene of the ſecond act, which is that for which I feel the greateſt partiality. The characteriſtic of Manlius is a natural propenſity to emulation, which when he diſcovers, he corrects, but does not relinquiſh.

Publius is the young lion that promiſes all the force of the ſire, but is not yet furniſhed with tuſks and claws; and it may eaſily be conjectured through his impetuoſity,

paſſion,

paſſion, and the inexperience of youth, what he will be, when arrived at maturity.

Lycinius is a pleaſing young man, valiant and reſolute, but extremely impaſſioned. Hence it is very difficult to convince him of the neceſſity of ſacrificing the genius of his wife, and even the life of his benefactor to glory, and the ſervice of his country.

Amilcar is an African, not accuſtomed to the maxims of probity and juſtice, which the Romans, at this time, profeſſed, and much leſs to their practice: hence, from the beginning, he remains in aſtoniſhment, being unable to comprehend a way of thinking ſo diametrically oppoſite to that of his country. He is, however, ambitious of imitating what he ſees; but, for want of moderation, goes awkwardly to work. However, during his ſhort reſidence at Rome, if he did not acquire the Roman virtue, he at leaſt learned to envy thoſe who poſſeſſed it.

The ruling paſſion of *Attilia* is tenderneſs and veneration for her father, whom ſhe not only prefers to Rome itſelf, but to her lover. Convinced by authority and example, ſhe, at length, adopts her father's ſentiments, but in the trial of that fortitude,

which

which ſhe wiſhed to imitate, ſhe manifeſtly ſinks under the weakneſs of her ſex. In *Barces*, I figured to myſelf a pleaſing, beautiful and lively African. Her temperament, like that of her nation, is amourous, and her tenderneſs for Amilcar extreme. In him, all her hopes, her fears, thoughts and cares, are centered. She is even more attached to her lover than the manners of her country; and is not only more indifferent than him about the Roman paſſion for glory, but thanks the Gods for having preſerved her from its contagion.

Theſe are the general outlines of the portraits I meant to draw; but you know that the pencil is not always faithful to the traces of the mind. It therefore depends upon you, who are not only an excellent artiſt, but a perfect friend to clothe my perſonages in ſo maſterly a manner, that if their features ſhould not ſtrike, they may be recognized, at leaſt, by their dreſs and ornaments.

And now, to come to particulars, according to your deſire, I ſhall ſpeak of the Recitatives, ſome of which I ſhould wiſh to be animated by Inſtruments; but in pointing them out I do not pretend to limit your

ideas:

ideas: where mine meet your wiſhes, adopt them; but where we diſagree, I beg of you not to change your opinion, in mere complacency.

In the firſt act, I find two ſituations in which inſtruments may aſſiſt me. The firſt is the whole harangue of Attilio to Manlius, in the ſecond ſcene, beginning

A che vengo! Ah fino a quando.
Wherefore do I come! When, ah tell me when.

After the words *A che vengo*, the inſtruments ſhould begin to be heard; and, afterwards, ſometimes ſilent, ſometimes accompanying the voice, and ſometimes by reinforcing, to give energy and fire to an oration in itſelf violent; and I ſhould like this accompaniment to continue to the end of the verſe

La barbara or qual è, Cartago, o Roma?
Now which is the barbarian, Carthage, or Rome?

But I believe that it will be neceſſary, particularly in this ſcene, to avoid the inconvenience of making the ſinger wait for the chord; otherwiſe all the heat and energy of the ſpeech would be chilled, and the inſtruments, inſtead of animating, would

enervate the recitative, and render the picture disjointed, obſcure, and ſuffocated in the frame. So that it ſeems here, as if all *ritornelli*, or interſtitial ſymphonies, ſhould be avoided.

The other ſituation is in the ſeventh ſcene of the ſame act; and is preciſely one of thoſe little places in which I ſhould wiſh Regulus to quit his moderation, and think more of himſelf than uſual. There are only twelve verſes that I ſhould wiſh to have accompanied; which begin at:

Io veniſſi a tradirvi - - - -
Through fear I ſhould betray you - - -

and end with:

Come al nome di Roma Africa tremi.
How Africa trembles at the name of Rome.

If you ſhould think accompaniment neceſſary here, I recommend the ſame œconomy of time as before; that the actor may not be embarraſſed or obliged to wait, by which that fire would be diminiſhed, which I wiſh to have encreaſed.

And now we are ſpeaking of the ſeventh ſcene of the firſt act, if you have no objection, I ſhould wiſh to have a very ſhort

ſymphony

ſymphony after this verſe of Manlius, *T'acheta: ei viene* *, to give time for the Conſul and Senators to take their places, and to allow Regulus leiſure for advancing ſlowly, and in a penſive manner. The character of the ſymphony ſhould be majeſtic, ſlow, and ſometimes interrupted; expreſſing as it were the ſtate of Regulus's mind, in reflecting upon his now entering that place as a ſlave, in which he formerly preſided as conſul. I ſhould like, that during one of theſe breaks in the ſymphony, Amilcar ſhould come in to ſpeak; when, during the ſilence of the inſtruments, he ſhould pronounce theſe verſes:

Regolo a che t'arreſti? E forſe nuovo
Per te queſto Soggiorno?

Why doſt thou ſtop, O Regulus? Is it from thy being unaccuſtomed to this aſſembly?

And the ſymphony ſhould not be concluded, till after Regulus's anſwer:

Penſo qual ne partii, qual vi ritorno.
I think of what I was, and what I return.

But after theſe words, I ſhould not wiſh the inſtruments to perform any thing more than a mere cloſe.

* Silence: He comes.

In the ſecond act, there ſeems to me no other recitative which requires accompaniment, than the ſoliloquy of Regulus, which begins thus, ſc. 7th.

Tu palpiti, o mio Cor!- - - -
Thou trembleſt, O my heart! - - - -

This ought to be recited ſitting, till after the following words:

——— *Ah no. Dè vili*
Queſto è il linguaggio.
Ah no! this is the language of ſlaves.

The reſt to be performed ſtanding; for as the exit of Regulus happens at the change of ſcene, it would be difficult if he were ſitting. But in order that he may have time and ſpace to move about ſlowly, ſtopping from time to time, and manifeſting himſelf to be immerſed in thought, it is neceſſary that the inſtruments ſhould introduce, aſſiſt, and ſecond, his reflections. While the actor is ſitting, as his reflections conſiſt of doubts and ſuſpenſions, they will afford an opportunity for extraneous modulation, and ſhort *ritornelli* for the inſtruments; but the inſtant he riſes, the reſt of the ſcene requires

reſolution and energy: ſo that I recur to my former wiſh, for œconomy of time.

And now we are ſpeaking of this ſcene, I muſt beg of you to correct the original, which I tranſmitted in the following manner. There is a meaning implied, which upon reflection ſeems to want clearneſs in the expreſſion.

——— *Ah no! Dè vili*
Queſto è il linguaggio. Inutilmente nacque
Chi ſol vive a ſe ſteſſo: e ſol da queſto
Nobili affetto ad obbliar s'impara
Se per altrui. Quanto a di ben la terra,
Alla gloria ſi dee.

Ah no! this is the language of the worthleſs. He is born to no purpoſe who lives but for himſelf. It is only from this noble affection of forgetting ourſelves, that we learn to be uſeful to others. Whatever the world can beſtow that is moſt valuable, is due to glory.

Though there are places in the third act, as well as in the other two, which I may have neglected to mention, where violins may be opportunely employed; yet I muſt obſerve, that this ornament ſhould not be rendered too familiar; and I ſhould be glad, if in this third act, particularly, no accom-

panied recitative occurred, till the *laſt ſcene*. This is prevented by the noiſe and tumult of the people, who cry out, *Regolo reſti*, "ſtay with us Regulus." The noiſe of theſe cries ought to be great, to imitate reality, and to manifeſt what a reſpectful ſilence the mere preſence of Regulus could obtain, from a whole tumultuous people. The inſtruments ſhould be ſilent when the other perſonages ſpeak; and, if you approve of it, may be employed whenever the Prototype ſpeaks in the *laſt ſcene*; varying, however, the movement and modulation, not merely to expreſs and enforce the words or ſentiments, as is thought a great merit by other compoſers, but to paint alſo the ſituation of mind of him who pronounces theſe words and ſentiments, at which ſuch maſters as you always aſpire. For you know, as well as I, that the ſame words and ſentiments may be uttered, according to the diverſity of ſituation, in ſuch a manner as to expreſs either joy, ſorrow, anger, or pity. I ſhould hope from ſuch hands as yours, that a recitative always accompanied by inſtruments, would not be ſuch a tireſome thing as it uſually is, from others. In the firſt place, becauſe you will preſerve that œconomy of time which I

have

have ſo much recommended; particularly, as you likewiſe ſo well know how to perfect the art, by the judicious and alternate uſe of *pianos* and *fortes*, by *rinforzandos*, by *ſtaccatos*, *ſlurs*, accelerating and retarding the meaſure, *arpeggios*, ſhakes, *ſoſtenutos*, and above all, by new modulation, of which you alone ſeem to know the whole arcana (*o*). But if, in deſpight of ſo many ſubſidiaries, you ſhould be of a different opinion, I ſhall readily give way to your experience, and be perfectly contented, if the following verſes are accompanied by violins; that is, the firſt ten, from:

Regolo reſti! Ed io l' aſcolto! Ed' io
Stay Regulus! And do I hear this! Can I - - -

To the verſe:

Meritai l'odio voſtro?
How have I deſerved your hatred?

Then from the verſe:

No: poſſibil non è. De' miei Romani
No: 'tis impoſſible. Of my Romans

To:

Eſorto cittadin: Padre commando.
I exhort you as a citizen: as a Father, I command.

(*o*) Theſe technical terms, and the refinements they expreſs, were but little known, at leaſt in England, forty years ago.

and laſtly from

Romani, addio. Siano i congedi eſtremi

to the end (*p*).

(*p*) This being the celebrated piece of Recitative, which, as ſet by Jomelli, was conſtantly encored when performed in England, by Serafini, in 1754, I ſhall give it here entire, with a literal tranſlation.

Romani, addio. Siano i congedi eſtremi	Romans, adieu. Let this our laſt farewel
Degni di noi. Lode agli Dei, vi laſcio,	Be worthy of us all. Thank heaven I leave you,
E vi laſcio Romani. Ah conſervate	And leave you Romans. Ah ſtrive to keep
Illibato il gran nome: e voi ſarete	Unſullied that great name; and you will be
Gli arbitri dilla terra; e il mondo intero	The Earth's ſole arbiters. All human kind
Roman diventerà. Numi cuſtodi	Will Roman ſoon become. Ye guardian pow'rs
Di queſt' almo terren; Dee protettrici	Of this bleſt land! Divinities who watch
Della ſtirpe d'Enea, confido a voi	Oe'r great Æneas' ſons! to you I truſt
Queſto popol d'Eroi: ſian voſtra cura	This race of heros; O protect with care
Queſto ſuol, queſte tetti, e queſte mura.	This foſtering ſoil, theſe manſions, and theſe walls.
Fate che ſempre in eſſe	May conſtancy, and fortitude,
La coſtanza, la fè, la gloria alberghi,	With valour, juſtice, glory, and good faith,
La giuſtizia, il valore. E, ſe giammai	Fix here their ſacred dwelling, and if
Minaccia il Campidoglio	Some evil and malignant ſtar
Alcun' aſtro maligno influſſi rei,	With influence dire the Capitol ſhould threat,
Ecco Regolo, O Dei: Regolo ſolo	Behold eternal Gods, your Regulus:
Sia la vittima voſtra; e ſi conſumi	Let him your victim be, and, on his head
Tutta l'ira del ciel ſul capo mio:	Let all the wrath of heav'n be ſpent. But ah!
Ma Roma illeſa - - - - Ah qui ſi piange! Addio.	Let Rome unhurt, remain - - - here—here I feel myſelf unman'd! - - - Adieu!

You

You imagine now, I ſuppoſe, that this tireſome diſcuſſion is over. No, Sir, we have ſtill a ſhort addendum to tack to it. I ſhould wiſh that the laſt chorus were one of that kind, with which you have excited in the audience a deſire of hearing it, unknown before; and that there ſhould be ſuch a ſtamp ſet on the *addio*, with which the Romans take a final leave of Regulus, as ſhall demonſtrate, that this Chorus is not like moſt others, a ſuperfluity, but a moſt eſſential part of the cataſtrophe.

I here quit the ſubject, not indeed, for want of materials, or will to converſe with you longer; but becauſe I am really tired myſelf, and fearful of tiring you.

Signor Annibali, is deſirous that I ſhould write ſomething to him, concerning his part *(a)*. But I muſt entreat you to read to him ſuch paſſages of this letter, as you may think likely to afford him any ſatisfaction. I have not time to peruſe what I have written; think then, whether it is poſſible for me to tranſcribe any part of it.

(*a*) Annibali, whoſe voice was a *contralto*, and who performed the part of Attilio, was in England, and ſung in Handel's Operas, at Covent Garden, in 1736-& 7. See his Character, *Hiſtory of Muſic*, vol. iv. p. 398. 402.

Preſent

Preſent a thouſand affectionate compliments in my name, to the incomparable Signora Fauſtina, and believe me, upon all occaſions, yours moſt truly *(b)*.

Vienna, 1749.

LETTER V.

TO THE ABATE PASQUINI.

I SHOULD rejoice, without bounds, at your happy arrival in your native country, if in the letter which you have been pleaſed to write to me on the ſubject, there tranſpired the leaſt ſign that you would rejoice yourſelf. I wiſh I may be miſtaken in my conjectures; but it is certain, that in your Laconic epiſtle, there does not appear the

(b) Regarding theſe memoirs as a kind of ſuppliment to my *General Hiſtory of Muſic*, I have inſerted a tranſlation of this letter, at full length, however long and technical it may appear to ſome of my readers; as I cannot help regarding the inſtructions of ſuch a Poet, to ſuch a Muſician, as precious relics, not only worthy of preſervation, but of being contemplated with reverence, by young Opera compoſers, ambitious not only to embelliſh, but enforce the imagery and ſentiments of the Poetry which they have to cloath with melody and harmony.

ſmalleſt

ſmalleſt ſpark of that content which uſually inflames a mind, *voti compos*. I wiſh you may enjoy that tranquility which you propoſe to yourſelf, and wiſh it from my heart; would to God you may diſcover the unknown ſource of happineſs.

My *Attilio Regolo* is preparing for the Theatre Royal at Dreſden, with all convenient diſpatch. Annibali writes me word, that the muſic of the two firſt acts, has already been rehearſed before their Majeſties, and is moſt excellent. I wiſh, as you may imagine, that its ſucceſs may anſwer expectation; but of this, you will certainly have a more ſincere account than myſelf; however, if it ſhould fail, there is no likelihood that rumour will be ſilent. It is long ſince my tranquility was at the mercy of popular breath. The public may determine how they pleaſe on the preſent occaſion; neither the exceſs nor want of approbation, will ſurpriſe me. I am too well convinced, that theſe rather depend on the fortuitous concourſe of a thouſand ſecret and minute accidents, than on the apparent motives to which they are aſcribed.

Vienna, Dec. 27th, 1749.

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LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME, AT SIENNA.

YOUR letter of the 19th of January, changed the pleaſure which I conſtantly uſed to receive from your correſpondence, into bitterneſs, at your complaints of the accompliſhment of my prediction concerning your migration into Tuſcany. Good God! have you then read, thought, and perhaps written, ſo much in vain about happineſs being the more difficult to attain, in proportion to the eagerneſs with which it is purſued! and have you then ſuffered your imagination to run away with you, ſo far as to think you ſhall come to beggary? Oh, but ſay you, I was not in earneſt, and our old maſters tell you that *turpe eſt dicere non putabam:* and, particularly, when before you took this ſtep, your friends with zeal haſtened to your aſſiſtance, as you well know, upon the firſt rumour, and did every thing in their power to enlighten you; they tried to hold you by the ſleeve, but you tore yourſelf from their hold. So true it is, that wiſe

maxims

maxims can never enable the mind to reſiſt the emotions of the heart, when, thanks to daily practice, they are mechanically converted into habits. For our diſgrace, the trade of a poet conſiſts more in ſaying what is right, than of practiſing it. But all this fine homily is already out of ſeaſon: conſider it merely as a tranſport of grief, I ſhould pleaſe you more, if I were leſs intereſted in your welfare. You regard me as Moliere's old man, who diſturbed at the news of his ſon's captivity, cries out every moment, *but what the devil had he to do on ſhip-board?* You aſk my help; but when you have obtained all that I can give, it will amount to but little. Yet, however convinced I may be of my debility, I ſhall not remain with my hands in my boſom, but ſhall try, at leaſt, to ſtimulate thoſe who have more ſtrength to help you on. I muſt confeſs, however, that I ſhould have had much more courage, if I were able to draw water from the ſource: there it is limpid and open, qualities which it does not preſerve in its canals.

That the Princeſs Royal occupies herſelf in tranſlating my *Attilio*, is ſtill a ſecret to me. She has, however, communicated to me many of her poetical productions, and without

out adulation, I declare, that I am always more and more ſurpriſed to find, that in ſpite of the delicacy of ſex, and the weighty affairs incident to her rank, ſhe has been able to mount ſo high on Parnaſſus.

All the letters from Dreſden confirm the fortune of *Attilio*. But the moſt flattering of all proofs, is the approbation of the King, who knows a great part of it by heart; a circumſtance of which he did not wiſh me to remain ignorant. He has deigned to have it inſinuated to me, that he ſhould have been highly pleaſed, if I could have been preſent at any one of the repreſentations; and in ſpite of the impertinence of my nerves, and of the uncommonly horrid winter which this perverſe year has produced, I ſhould have given way to ſuch an excuſable vanity, if the whole medical faculty, and the outcries of my friends, had not prevented me. This, my dear Abate, is the moſt illuſtrious premium that I can propoſe to my labours, the reſt is more an affair of others, than my own.

The Neapolitan Envoy at Dreſden, loads me with a mercantile care, little adapted to my profeſſion. He never had written to me before; but now writes only on this ſubject,

and

and is determined that I ſhall have enough of it, for he ſpeaks of nothing elſe. This confidence does not more ſurpriſe, than honour me. You, according to him, are to ſpeak to me on the ſame chapter. Oh poor humanity! Adieu, believe me without exaggeration, yours moſt ſincerely.

Vienna, February 7, 1750.

LETTER VII.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

I feel more pain than remorſe at not having been able to anſwer your letter of the 25th of April, ſooner. My health, ſome domeſtic affairs, a world of commiſſions for other people, and different maledictions, have phyſically prevented me from being with you, but not at all from thinking of you. I have frequently ſpoken of your affairs to Count Loſi, and have always found him full of benevolence towards you. It would not be amiſs, if you were to join in teazing him, by thanking him for the partiality towards you which he has repeatedly mentioned to me; deſcribing to him in the ſhorteſt manner poſſible, the true ſtate of your

affairs; and magnifying the hope you place in his kind offices.

I read with pleaſure the Canzonetta of Signora Livia Accarigi. It is poetical, happy, graceful, and harmonious: and coming from a lady, is, in ſhort, more than ſufficient to diſgrace our whole ſex. You may ſafely and conſcientiouſly congratulate her upon it in my name. I know not whether our auguſt patron has yet ſeen it; but I know that I have laid ſuch a train, that he certainly will ſee it.

Vienna, June 6, 1750.

END OF THE SEVENTH SECTION.

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SECTION VIII.

We ſhall now reſume the correſpondence of our poet with his friend Farinelli, which ſeems to have been the moſt cordial and conſtant literary intercourſe he ſuſtained after the death of the Romanini. In a former letter to him that has been inſerted in theſe memoirs (*c*), Metaſtaſio ſpeaks of his *naſal* impatience for the arrival of a preſent of ſnuff, which had been ſent to him from Spain by the vocal favourite of that court; and now he gives an account of its being in his poſſeſſion.

LETTER I.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

Notwithstanding a croud of letters that lie before me, and which will remain

(*c*) See above. p. 295.

in peace, till the tortured nerves of my poor head will allow me to anſwer them, I cannot poſtpone embracing you, and giving you an account of the ſnuff being arrived, and in my poſſeſſion, together with the vanilla, and bark. I received the cheſt two days ago, proud of ever having had a ſhare in the Spaniſh Flota. It is impoſſible to thank you in a more expreſſive formula, than in ſaying aloud, that the gift is worthy of your heart. The whole city and court are already informed of it; and I take eſpecial care, that juſtice is done to my moſt beloved twin. The bark and ſnuff, are arrived in the higheſt preſervation. The vanilla is a little dry, and, in ſome of the extremities, it has contracted a kind of ruſt, or mouldineſs, which made me fear it was ſpoiled. But the learned in ſuch matters have cleaned it, and ſay that it will be ſtill uſeful. I ſhould enter upon a long and formal acknowledgement, but we know one another too well: you would ſkip like a graſshopper; and I ſhould not ſay half what I feel. You who are in my heart, or rather who have it with you, aſk it how it feels.

Laſt week I ſent you the drama of the *Cineſi*, with the additional part you deſired.

If the paſſage which you propoſed by a merchant ſhip, is as ſhort as it ought to be, you will have it twenty-three, or twenty-four days, before Eaſter. But if not, the fault will be your correſpondent's, not mine. The preſent letter will go through Paris directly to Madrid. Obſerve, when you receive it, the difference of time that it has been on the road, from that of former letters.

Mareſchal Count Pinos has been here, to thank me for the partiality which you have ſhewn to his nephew. He is impatient to obey your commands in ſomething or other, and extremely ſorry that the buſineſs of Sig. Rodolfo is abſolutely impracticable. He entreats you to put him to ſome other trial; and, in the mean time, if it ſhould be convenient and deſirable for his ſon to try his fortune, and enter into his ſervice, he will give him a company in his own regiment.

Our Counteſs d'Althan thanks you for the favourable notice you have taken of her nephew; is much pleaſed with your remembrance; and having divided with her my ſnuff, it will conſtantly ſtimulate gratitude, at leaſt in the naſal ſenſe.

By your ſilence concerning ſeveral of my letters, I begin to apprehend that they are

loſt. Your laſt is dated the 28th of November.

Whenever an opportunity offers, I beg you will never fail to lay at the feet of your Deity, the moſt humble tributes of my profound reſpect: and ſay, that authoriſed by ſuch an oracle, my vanity begins to become a virtue. Adieu my dear Gemello. Thanks again, and—No, no; you begin to bounce. Love me as I do you, and I deſire no more.

Vienna, 3d of 1750 (*d*).

In the next letter to his old and zealous friend, he reſumes the unfortunate ſubject of his Neapolitan place; and ſpeaks of the proſecutions of fortune, in ſpite of all the favour and partiality of the four principal ſovereigns in Europe, with equal energy and indignation. And it does ſeem, as if princes were more negligent, or leſs able than is generally imagined, to reward ſuch captivating talents as Metaſtaſio's, even at the time when they were moſt enchanted by them, and when they moſt openly con-

(*a*) In none of Metaſtaſio's Letters, written during the firſt month of the year, is January mentioned.

feſſed their obligations. That no one of theſe princes would encourage the ſeizure of a purchaſed place, in order to reward his merit at another's expence, was a virtuous forbearance; but that no one of them, or that all together, would not indemnify the poet's loſs by an adequate penſion, is a moſt marvellous inſtance of the inefficacy of royal favour!

LETTER II.

TO FARINELLI.

All the newſpapers are full of the royal magnificence with which you have brought out my *Demofoonte*. In ſhort Madrid, thanks to your care, occupies the firſt place among all the theatres in Europe. And this will always happen, where princes have good noſes, and can diſtinguiſh a melon from a pumpkin; in ſhort, when they do not order the ſhoe-maker to do the buſineſs of a barber; or the barber to make boots. All this theatrical primacy on the banks of the Manzanare, except the ſovereign ſupport, is your work: and whatever does you honour, ſweetly excites my twin tenderneſs.

You may eaſily imagine whether I am flattered or not, by the generous nation in which you reſide, honouring me with the title of the great Spaniſh poet: I ſhould be pleaſed if I were a hermit in a deſert, or a mummy baked into a monk of La Trappe; conſider then to what degree I muſt be intoxicated, being a poet, and living in a court. But the venerated oracle pronounced in my favour, by the firſt ſtar of this firmament, is ſo great and ſo enviable a premium for my poor labours, that I forget their inefficacy in procuring me ſome little favour from my enemy fortune. I begin to wiſh that ſome author would take it into his head to write my life, and without the leaſt deviation from trtuh, would begin thus: *In the eighteenth century, lived a certain Abate Metaſtaſio, a tolerable poet among bad ones: neither handſome nor ugly; more full of wants than avarice; with the fair-ſex tender, but reſpectful; faithful to his friends, though uſeleſs; endowed with a deſire to do good, but devoid of the means. He laboured during his whole life, at once to inſtruct and delight mankind; but fortune was always ſo much his foe, that in ſpite of the rectitude, pity, and grandeur, of the moſt juſt ſovereigns in Europe, he had been deprived,*

deprived, without a crime, of the miſerable reward of his innumerable labours, and the means of ſecuring the leaſt proviſion for old age; but notwithſtanding ſo many misfortunes, he died proud, and contented; in remembring that one of the greateſt, moſt enlightened, and moſt amiable princeſſes upon earth, had preferred him to all the poets who flouriſhed during the age in which he lived.

Jomelli is the beſt compoſer, of whom I have any knowledge, for words. Be aſſured that I have no partiality for him. It is true, that he repeats too much; but it is the preſent epidemical vice of Italy, of which he will ſoon be corrected. He has ſometimes reſtrained the caprice and ambition of ſingers. But there are no Farinellis, to whoſe taſte and judgment a poet may ſafely reſign himſelf.

A company of ladies, enliſted under the banner of the Counteſs d'Althan, will have me ſpeak of them, and tell you how much they love you, in ſpite of the miſchief which you have done them, in rendering your imitators intolerable. But this would be a long buſineſs; and I have hardly time to mention the affection with which I am, &c.

To relieve you from the tireſomeneſs of of this letter, I ſend you a *Canzonetta* on the depa:ture of *Niſa*. You will find it very tender, but do not wrong me ſo far as to ſuppoſe me in love. You know whether I am capable of ſuch imbecility. The muſic is common, and my own; but whoever ſings it with a little expreſſion, will find it ſufficient to vanquiſh a *Niſa*. A better compoſition would acquire more applauſe to the muſician, bnt fewer advantages to the lover.

Vienna, January 28, 1750.

A letter which he wrote to the Princeſs of Belmonte, with his beautiful Canzonet, *La Partenza*, dated Feb. 21, 1750, has been preſerved in the family, and the following tranſcript of it has been inſerted in the memoirs of the poet, by Sig. Mattei.

" I am ſo pleaſed and flattered by the correſpondence with which your excellency deigns to continue to honour me, that the ſlighteſt pretext for *keeping it alive*, ſeems to me a moſt weighty reaſon for writing. The excuſe for the preſent letter, will be the incloſed canzonet, which makes me

begin

begin to fancy it good for ſomething. I wrote it more than a year ago, through mere complaiſance, and thought it ſo little worthy of appearing in public, that I ſuppoſed it would either die almoſt as ſoon as born, or lead a ſolitary and obſcure life in ſome forgotton deſk of the perſon for whom it was unwillingly produced. But I perceive, that I was miſtaken: it was not born for a monaſtic life: it has begun to ſuffer itſelf to be ſeen by ſtealth: difficulty enhances the price of every thing. It has acquired fame (as often happens) by exaggerated accounts of its beauty. This fame has created an eager deſire of poſſeſſion, in many who have been but too eaſily gratified by the firſt raviſher. And fearing, that my ſtrolling Helen, paſſing from one of her pretended admirers to another, might poſſibly be heard of by your Excellence, before her exiſtence was announced by myſelf, I now ſend her; not from thinking her worthy of favour, but to preclude the accuſation of negligence. Here ſhe is. Suſpend moſt venerated princeſs, your natural gentleneſs and candour: treat her with ſeverity; make her do penance, and regard her as a diſobedient daughter, who has had the affrontery to elope from

her

her father. Your Excellence has long known, that I am unable to write any thing that is to be ſung, without imagining ſome ſort of muſic. What I now ſend, was written *to the muſic which accompanies it* (*e*). It is indeed a very ſimple melody; yet, if ſung with that tender expreſſion which I ſuppoſe, it will be ſufficient to ſecond the force of the words: and whatever muſic of a more refined and ſtudied ſpecies ſhall be applied to them, may produce greater applauſe to the muſician, but will certainly be leſs advantagious to the poet."

As no doubt remains that the *Canzonetta, La Partenza*, was written to the ſame air which the poet had ſet to *La Libertà*, I ſhall here preſent my muſical readers with another copy of that air, with which I have been favoured by Doctor *Haydn*, who well remembers the having heard Metaſtaſio ſing it. There is ſome little difference between this copy and that with which I was furniſhed by *Cocchi*; and in order to enable the

(*e*) This is almoſt a proof that the air which Metaſtaſio himſelf had ſet to his *Libertà*, had ſerved during the time of inſpiration, to regulate the metre of *La Partenza*, and probably of his *Palinodia*, as the verſification of all theſe three poems, is the ſame.

Engliſh

Engliſh reader to form ſome faint idea of the beautiful ſentiments of the original poem, and to furniſh him with a ſecond *excuſe* for ſinging Metaſtaſio's own melody, a verſion in the ſame ſhort metre is attempted; in which, the difficulty will but too plainly appear, of compreſſing into our language, all the ideas of the original, in the ſame number of words.

There was a ſtory current in Vienna, in 1772, concerning the occaſion of the following Canzonet. The *Nice*, who had been the heroine of *La Libertà*, was not the heroine of *La Partenza*, nor was the diſtreſs which the poet deſcribes, his own; but that of a young nobleman of very high rank, who having been ſo deeply enamoured of a beautiful young opera dancer, as to make his friends fear he would elope with her, and make her his wife, they entreated Metaſtaſio to reaſon with the young lover, and try to prevail on him to let her be ſent away to ſome remote country, in order to facilitate his cure. The poet tells the Princeſs di Belmonte, in the preceding letter, that he wrote the Canzonet *unwillingly and through mere complaiſance*; and in a letter to Farinelli, written about the ſame time, different

from

from that in which the little poem was ſent, we have the ſtory, though conſiderably diſguiſed. In ſpeaking of ſuch performers of all kinds as were then employed in the Imperial theatre, and who when their engagements were out, might be of uſe in that of Madrid, he ſays: "By the incloſed memorial, you will perceive, that I reccommend to you a female dancer, who is much applauded here. But you muſt not judge of her haſtily. I am not acquainted with her, nor have I ever ſpoken to her in my life. But every one knows how much I am yours, and all apply to me. I am, however, not exempt from intereſt in this buſineſs, as I now perform an office which may be of ſome utility in its conſequences; for by ſerving this lady, a very deſirable work will be performed, which I ſhall explain to you in two words.

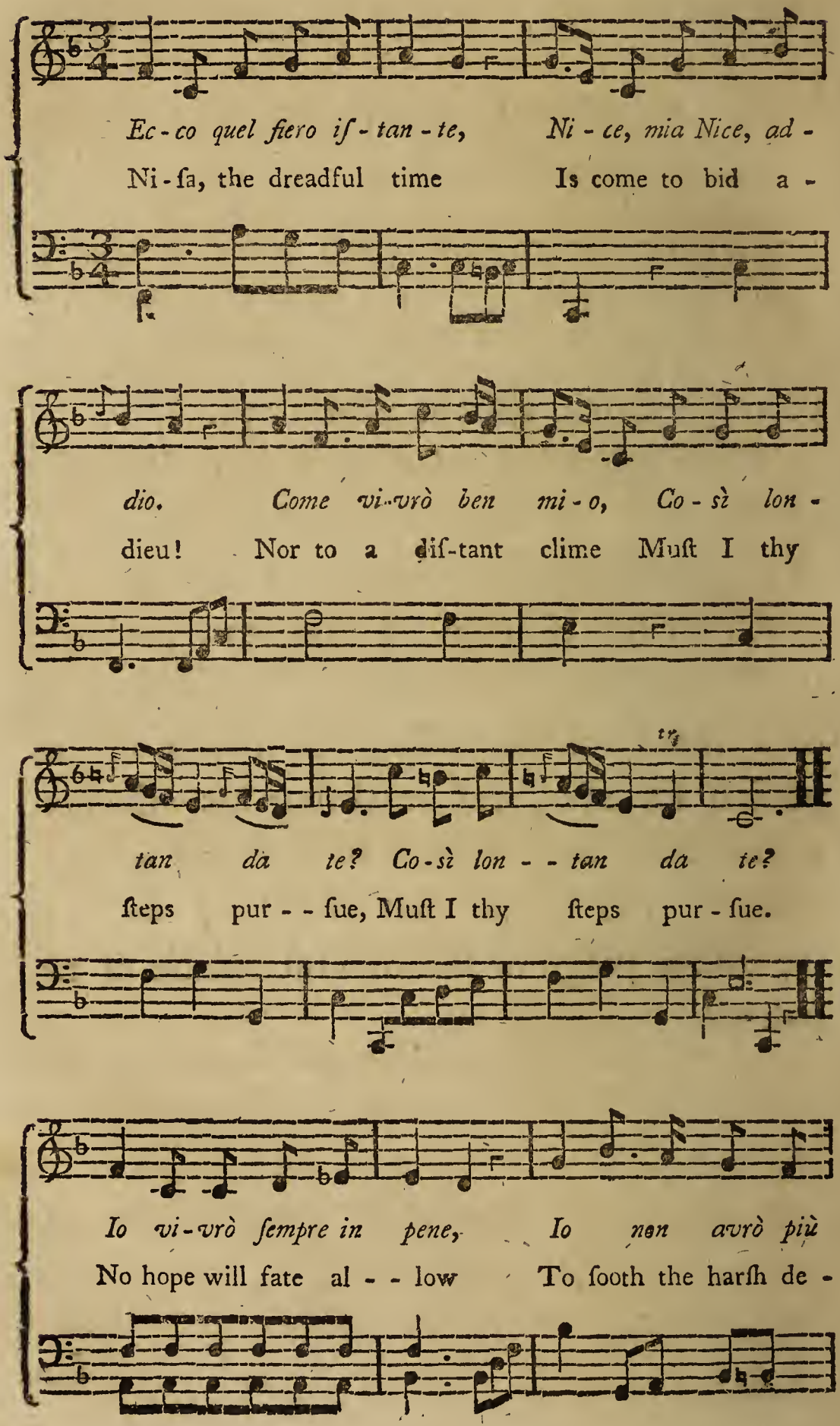
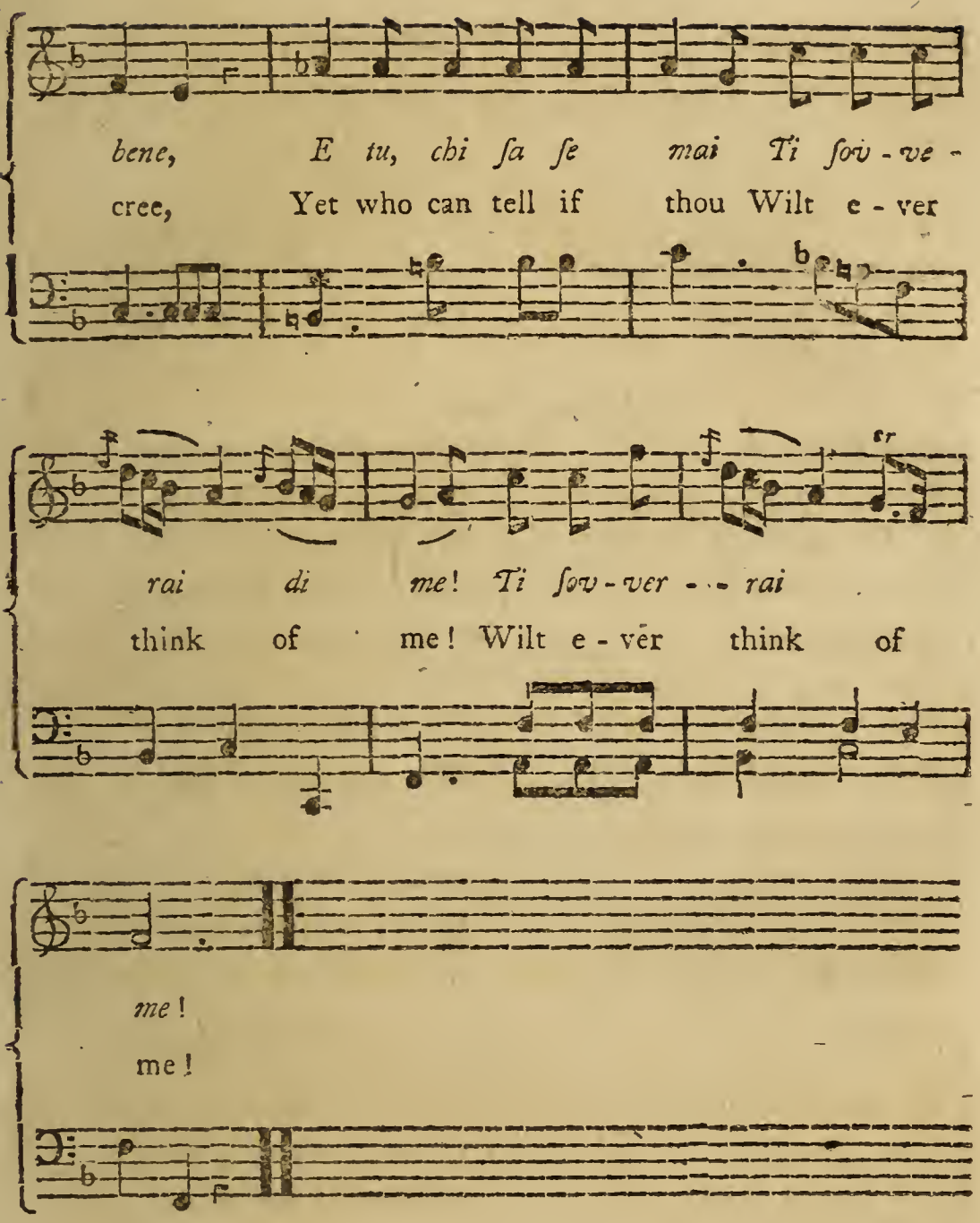
A young gentleman of my acquaintance, though married to a moſt beautiful lady, is over head and ears in love with this nymph. By dint of preaching, I have prevailed on him to part from her; but he proteſts, that he is unable to reſiſt her attractions, if ſhe remains here. If you could poſſibly employ her, I really believe ſhe would

would be approved. But at all events, let me have ſuch a letter from you, as when ſhewn, ſhall convince my friend that I did not deceive him, when I promiſed to write to you."

Late editors tells us, that the canzonet in queſtion, was written in 1746; but it appears from the author's own account, that it was written in 1749: we find, however, no mention made of it to his moſt confidential correſpondents, till the year 1750.

The hapleſs lover ſeems to have impoſed on the poet, the deſcription of his ſufferings, as a penance for the ſacrifice which he had made to his eloquence; and few, perhaps, who can aſſume the deſperate circumſtances of a lover, relinquiſhing the object of his paſſion for ever, yet retaining his affection without the moſt diſtant hope of its gratification, will think that the bard was no ſuperficial judge of the mental diſeaſe of his patient.

La Partenza, or the Separation.


Ec-co quel fiero if-tan-te, Ni-ce, mia Nice, ad-
Ni-ſa, the dreadful time Is come to bid a-
dio. Come vi-vrò ben mi-o, Co-sì lon-
dieu! Nor to a diſ-tant clime Muſt I thy
tan da te? Co-sì lon--tan da te?
ſteps pur--ſue, Muſt I thy ſteps pur-ſue.
Io vi-vrò ſempre in pene, Io non avrò più
No hope will fate al--low To ſooth the harſh de-

bene, E tu, chi ſa ſe mai Ti ſov-ve-
cree, Yet who can tell if thou Wilt e-ver
rai di me! Ti ſov-ver-rai
think of me! Wilt e-ver think of
me!
me!

II.

Soffri che in traccia almeno
Del mio perduta pace
Venga il penſier ſeguace
Su l'orme del tuo pié.
Sempre nel tuo camino,
Sempre m'avrai vicino;
E tu, chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

Let me in volant thought
Ideal bliſs renew,
By reminiſcence taught
I'll ſtill thy ſteps purſue.
Full in my ſight as now
Thy image e'er will be:
Yet, who can tell if thou
Wilt ever think of me!

Io fra remote ſponde
Meſto volgendoi paſſi,
Andrò chiedendo a i ſaſſi,
La ninfa mia dov' é!
Dall'una all'altra aurora,
Te andró chiamando ognora:
E tu, chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

III.

In ſolitary ways,
While ſorrowing I go,
To rocks I'll ſing thy praiſe,
To echo tell my woe.
The woods ſhall hear my vow,
And Zephyr bring it thee:
Yet, who can tell if thou
Wilt ever think of me!

Io rivedrò ſovente
Le amene piagge, o Nice,
Dove vivea felice
Quando vivea con te,
A me ſaran tormento
Centomemorie e cento:
E tu, chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

IV.

To ſcenes my reſtleſs mind
Will ever have the clue,
When time and fate were kind,
And Niſa was in view.
And theſe regretting, how
From pain can I be free:—
Yet, who can tell if thou
Wilt ever think of me!

Ecco (dirò) quelfonte,
Dove avvampó di ſdegno,
Ma poi di pace in ſegno
La bella man mi diè.
Qui ſi vivea di ſpeme;
Là ſi languiva inſieme;
E tu, chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

V.

Sometimes the fountain viewing,
Where Niſa once look'd grave;
Then kindneſs ſweet renewing,
Her beauteous hand ſhe gave.
Here hope ſate on thy brow,
There fear no hope could ſee:
Yet, who can tell if thou
Wilt ever think of me!

Quantivedrai giungendo
Al nuovo tuo ſoggiorno,
Quanti vernirti intorno,
A offrirti amore e ſè.
Oh dio! Chi ſa fra tanti
Teneri omaggi, e pianti,
Oh Dio! Chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

VI.

What votaries ſoon will croud
Thy ſhrine both day and night,
Declare their ſuit aloud,
When I am out of ſight?
Oh heav'n! while theſe all bow
And bend the ſupple knee,
Who, Niſa, knows if thou
Wilt e'er remember me!

Penſa qual dolce ſtrale,
Cara mi laſci in ſeno:

VII.

Think of the fatal dart,
I evermore ſhall guard,

Penſa

Penſa che amò Fileno
Senza sperar mercè:
Penſa, mia vita, a queſto
Barbaro addio funeſto;
Penſa——Ah, chi ſa ſe mai
Ti ſovverrai di me!

Deep rankling in my heart,
Remote from all reward!
Think from my miſery now,
How wretched I ſhall be—
But dare I hope that thou
Wilt ever think of me!

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

By the beginning of yours, dated the 13th of the preſent year, I perceive that, deceived by the chearfulneſs of the ſtyle of my letters, you think me in perfect health. But do not truſt to that, my dear Gemello; you ſhould remember, that fiction is the capital of us Poets; beſides, you inſpire me with good humour, whenever I take up the pen to write to you: for I find you the moſt efficacious antidote to the acidities and flatulencies with which my poor ſtomach and head are afflicted, and againſt all the other moſt genteel maledictions, that are lodged in my little ſhattered machine; which, however, manifeſts no outward ſign of internal perſecution. My circumference is not diminiſhed; or my countenance fallen; and

very often, when I am engaged in the moſt violent conflict with my ſufferings, I am obliged to thank my friends for their congratulations upon my apparent enviable ſtate of health. This would wear out my patience, did I not reflect, that the ſame mockery happens to moſt of thoſe, whom the world from external appearances, thinks arrived at the ſummit of human felicity, amidſt the rank, riches, and honours, with which they are ſurrounded. How often would theſe illuſtrious wretches, gladly change their condition with the moſt miſerable of their adorers! Your Gemello has attempted to deſcribe this in his *Giuſeppe riconoſciuto.*

Se a ciaſcum l'interno affanno,
Si legeſſe in fronte ſcritto;
Quanti mai che invidia fanno
Ci farebbero pieta!

If mental ſufferings we could read
Inſcribed with truth upon each brow,
With pity then our hearts would bleed,
For thoſe whom moſt we envy now!

But what hypochondraic dæmon has dipped me into morality! What a peſtiferous drug for low ſpirits! If we wiſh for relief, let us have recourſe to other means, as theſe have been long tried in vain.

You

You would have me pass for such a sorcerer in Poetry, as you are in Music; but, my dear Gemello, you will never have an accomplice in your crimes. If even my verses should have the magical power which you ascribe to them, I am always infinitely less dangerous than you. Among all the inhabitants of the globe, the number of those who understand the Italian language is very small; and among those, few have a taste for Poetry, and still fewer a critical knowledge of its beauties and defects. But every living creature has ears, and all feel themselves highly delighted by those subtil and insidious harmonical proportions, unknown to your predecessors, with which you only have had the power to render practicable, the secret road by which the ear carries on an intercourse with the heart. Therefore repent, my dear Wizard, repent of your crimes.

Where is the wonder that there should be disputes concerning the length or shortness of the Princess of Phrygia? Tastes have always differed. Some will have it long, and some short; and in my opinion both are right; because, according to the hackneied axiom, *de gustibus non est disputandum.*

I am for the medium: and between the two extremes, for the ſhort: yet, as a Poet, I muſt adopt the long, whether I will or no; for the following reaſon: That whimperer, Æneas, before he went to Carthage, to lead aſtray the poor widow of your acquaintance, had a wife in Troy; and the D—l would have it, that ſhe was called *Creuſa*, like our Princeſs. Virgil, in his Æneid, repeats the name of this good lady, at leaſt ten times, and always places it at the end of a verſe, making it conſtantly conſiſt of three ſyllables, of which the *penultima* is always *long*. Now, if I had the temerity to oppoſe the authority of Virgil, I ſhould run the riſk of excommunication from the whole poetical hierarchy; nor would a pilgrimage to Delphos or Helicon, be ſufficient to reconcile me with Parnaſſus. So that I muſt, whether I will or not, accommodate myſelf to the long name. But you, who for your comfort are not dipped in poetry, are under no neceſſity to attend to theſe circumſtances. I admire your temporiſing, like Fabius Maximus, and contenting both parties. You could not have done better, than by ordering, as you have wiſely done, that one half of the ſingers ſhould contract the name, and

the

the other lengthen it. The expedient pleaſes me ſo much, that I ſhall make uſe of it in Muſic; and when there is any doubt, whether a third ſhould be flat or ſharp, I ſhall play it flat with one hand, and ſharp with the other: thus the ears of every one will be gratified.

The Counteſs d'Althan, Marechal Vaſquez, and Count Eſterhaſi, ſalute you cordially. I have already mentioned in my preceding letter, the inundation of ſnuff; I therefore ſhall not fatigue you with reſuming the ſubject, but merely tell you, that every pinch I take, is a memento of the amiable donor.

Let us now make peace about dates, becauſe by the reply to my laſt letter, you have well paid me for that which was forgotten; but we ſhall ſtill diſpute affection, as I ſuſtain that I love you more than I have a right to expect you to love me.

Vienna, Feb. 11, 1750.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

What kind of cruelty is this, my moſt inhuman, moſt ungrateful, and, in ſpite of all this, moſt beloved Gemello! Here, in order to obey your commands, am I up to the chin in mud: I have thirty horſes to guide, and ten beaſts who govern them: from morning to night am I beſet with horſe-ſhoes, ſaddles, harneſs, cloth-bags, coachmen, poſtilions, farriers, and ſadlers, who ſpin my head like a top. I expect every poſt-day to be comforted with a letter from you, but none arrives. You have ſomething elſe to do: I know it, and pity you; but could not you, at leaſt, order ſomebody elſe, merely to write me word how you do? You have no conception, at ſuch a diſtance, how many melancholy thoughts your ſilence generates. I love you as much as you merit, that is without end; and it is impoſſible for any one to love at that rate, and not be afraid. I never doubt of your heart, knowing it as I do. It is too great,

and

and too worthy, not to coincide with one that is ſo much yours as I am; but the not hearing from you for ſuch a length of time, is a faſt too long and rigorous, for the Metaſtaſian ſtomach. Adieu; I have no time to-day for a longer letter, having been occupied in your ſervice another way. If I do not put the caravan in motion, I know not what would ſoon happen: I have no time to breathe. I ſent you a canzonetta. Have you received it? Adieu once more.

P. S. The letter already written is long enough; and yet I cannot help making a little addition to it, in favour of the agreeable Madamoiſelle Caſtellina; to whom I adviſed the ſalubrious air of Aranjuez in company with her phyſician. I have always in my former letters begged of you to ſay and do a thouſand kind things in my name; but you have never given me the leaſt aſſurance of having executed my commiſſion. Can you be jealous? Oh what a vile infirmity! I pity you extremely, my dear Gemello, particularly, when I reflect, that no one is cured of this malady in Spain. We good people of Germany know nothing of ſuch a diſorder, except in a moſt moderate degree; juſt as a mere ſauce to love. You ſouthern folks, devoid

of all charity for your neighbours, want to keep the paſſion of love wholly to yourſelves, without affording the ſlighteſt portion of its ſweets to any one elſe. But enough of this; you ſhould thank heaven, that we are ſo far aſunder; otherwiſe, in ſpite of your numerous merits, and the paucity of mine, I ſhould give way to all the rage I could muſter againſt you; but theſe are caſtles in the air. I threaten you with war from the Danube, and you laugh defiance on the Manzanare. *E nce facice fa ſpotazelle. Ai ragione e no poco de cchiu.*

I wrote to you a few weeks ago, concerning a young perſon, called Signora *Colomba Mattei*; and I wrote you the truth, though I was commanded to make her panegyric. I hear that Madame Teſi has written to you about her likewiſe. Without the leaſt myſtery, ſhe is a good moveable, and pleaſes here very much. I beg you will write to me in ſuch a manner that I may ſhew my principal how obedient I have been. Act, however, in ſuch a manner as ſhall ſuit you beſt. There is no harm in your being informed of the merchandiſe of this place, as you may probably have occaſion for it in your future theatrical direction.

My dear Gemello, your love is every thing to me, and wants to be ſweetened by no preſents: ſnuff, however, excepted, which cannot be refuſed. There is ſuch a miſerable ſcarcity here at preſent of this drug, that the worſt quality is ſold by the dealers at an enormous price; while the beſt, which can only be brought in with the greateſt difficulty, is but ordinary, and my noſe is an impertinent member, which will not be content with every ſort. If you will take pity on it, know that it diſlikes dry ſnuff, and has poſitively an inſuperable averſion for that of a reddiſh colour. Its favourite tint, is a pale yellow. I have already ſpoken to the dealer, who, in conſidertion of my poetical faculty, will make me pay only three florins a pound, and will give me the earlieſt intelligence of the arrival of the cheſt that is directed to me. I beg you will not think me troubleſome, becauſe, on the ſubject of ſnuff, it is impoſſible to be modeſt.

Vienna, May 2, 1750.

Metaſtaſio's correſpondence with Sig. *Fran. d'Argenvilliers*, the banker, at Rome, began this year; and though theſe letters chiefly

chiefly turn on his money concerns, in that city, and at Naples, yet there are in them frequent traits of friendſhip, gratitude, and genius, which in the Italian language are intereſting and beautiful.

After acknowledging the kind manner in which he had honoured the draughts which his brother had preſented to him, he ſays, "I ſhall not enter on the panegyrics due to your attentive, diligent, and friendly exactitude. I feel, that the occaſion which I have for it, far ſurpaſſes my power of praiſe. I hope you think my heart well organized; and *that* taken for granted, my mere acknowledgment is worth a hundred orations of Demoſthenes. Continue to honour me with the place which you have aſſigned me in your good heart, which I ſhall always moſt anxiouſly endeavour to deſerve."

In the next letter he ſays: "The eagerneſs which you manifeſt for my coming to Rome, I can aſſure you, without poetical fiction, adds many *ſtimuli* to my own paſſion for ſuch a viſit. But how many curſed flutes ſhould I have to tune, before that could happen! Yet who knows? I have not relinquiſhed hope. In the meantime, I beg to

be

be honoured with your affection, in ſpite of my involuntary Laconiſm; but pray believe me orientally, and with the moſt ſincere, grateful, and tender eſteem, &c."

In another letter of the ſame year, after thanking Sig. Argenvilliers for his kind offices, he adds: "I am proud of your friendſhip, and correſpondence; but I ſhould be more ſecure and tranquil, if you could ſuggeſt to me ſome expedient in my power, of which I am ignorant, to be of a little uſe to you in return, that I might flatter myſelf with not always ſpunging upon you for my own advantage. Pray analyſe my abilities. It is true, for my mortification, that the herbs in my garden are uſeleſs; and yet, in the hands of an excellent botaniſt, who knows what virtues may be found in them?"

In anſwer to this letter, his friend ſeems to have kept up the botanical metaphor, to which Metaſtaſio, on the point of ſetting out for his annual excurſion into Moravia, replies:

"You ſend me a botanical challenge; but, thank heaven, my departure furniſhes me with a plauſible pretext for ſhunning ſuch a trial. I hardly know a nettle from a

thiſtle,

thiſtle, and you ſpeak to me of dittany and wound-wort. But the poſtilion is impatient. Adieu."

We ſhall return, chronologically, to this correſpondence; but, at preſent, it is neceſſary to reſume that with Farinelli.

By the irregularity of the poſt, Metaſtaſio had been deprived of letters from his friend at Madrid a conſiderable time; and when they arrived, after a long interval, he addreſſed him in the following manner.

LETTER V.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

At length you have given way to remorſe, and your long, affectionate, and cordial letter, has made me ample amends for all my cruel ſufferings, on account of your ſilence. I thank you heartily, and ſend you a legion of embraces. I ſhall not exaggerate the pleaſure which you have given me, as you, who have my heart in your poſſeſſion, may underſtand me beſt when I am ſilent.

Now I ſhall reply to your letter, paragraph by paragraph; but if it were poſſible for

for me ever to be ſhort in writing to you, I ſhould be brief now; as I am preſſed for time. I hear, from the venerated Marquis Enſenada, the affectionate manner in which you ſpeak of me, from the extreme goodneſs of your heart. But you were born to taſte the bleſſings of ſweetening humanity. The poſſeſſion of a friend of ſuch a caliber, is not a ſmall melioration of exiſtence.

Your muſic to my canzonet is expreſſive, graceful, and the legitimate offspring of one arrived at ſupremacy in the art. I thank you for communicating it to me, particularly as a teſtimony of your love; but if it was maliciouſly ſent, as a critique on mine, I ſhall take care to revenge myſelf on the firſt poetry that you ſhall ſend to the preſs. Yet, if the devil ſhould tempt you to become a poet, who knows but you may unſheath ſome other latent talent? Oh nothing elſe is wanting to complete my ruin, but to have you for a rival. *Sia ditto n'funno a lo maro* (*f*). And ſo my canzonet has obtained the approbation of the Deity of the Manzanare? And the name of the Poet

(*f*) This ſentence is Neapolitan, and implies: *may the idea go to the bottom of the ſea.*

Metaſtaſio

Metaſtaſio has had the glory of being pronounced by royalty? My beloved Gemello, you who have procured me an honour which conſoles me for all the labours of my life, ſupport me in this elevation: and if you cannot in juſtice exaggerate my merit, make known at leaſt my humble joy and gratitude.

I hope the duet which I incloſe will manifeſt my eagerneſs to be of ſome uſe; it certainly is not the worſt of my productions. Read it with attention, and you will find, excluſive of the tenderneſs and character of the two interlocutors, an imitation of an anſwer made to Louis XIV. by the neice of Cardinal Mazarin, who ſeeing him ſhed tears at her being ſeparated from him cries out: *Are you a King, yet weep, and ſuffer me to depart?* This correſponds very well with the incidents of the Opera. Believe me, my dear friend, that ever deſirous of ſeconding your wiſhes to the utmoſt of my power, I would on all accounts do it in the Opera you deſire, and what I will do for you, I will do for no other living creature; but this is not invention, but a long mental fatigue, and violent application which I have never yet undergone without danger.

It

It is true that life is ſhort, and for this very reaſon, I know that you would not wiſh me to make it ſtill ſhorter. If I find myſelf able to oblige you, moſt certainly I ſhall want no ſpur. I am ſo much yours, that I ſeem to partake of the favours and honours heaped on you with ſo liberal a hand, by your moſt clement ſovereign; ſo, that it almoſt ſeems neceſſary for me to thank them not only in your name, but my own. And on account of this merit, I forgive fortune all the cruelty with which ſhe has treated me in my own particular. You may judge whether ſhe is my enemy or no, by reflecting, that with ſuch a twin-brother as yourſelf, with the protectors whom you procure me, the divinities whom you render benevolent, and ſuch numberleſs reaſons of equity operating in my favour, I have been ſo long unable, with ſuch pains, recommendations, and humble prayers, to obtain any thing either from favour or juſtice. I conſole myſelf, that life, as you obſerve, is ſhort, and that Madame Fortune, will not long divert herſelf in perſecuting me. Indeed, my experience is ſuch, as renders me leſs vulnerable, and leſs ſenſible to the

ſtrokes of this capricious enemy than formerly.

If you ſhould employ Jomelli, I truſt you will thank me for it; and if ever you ſhould ſee him, you will be attached to him, as he is certainly the moſt amiable *gourmand* that ever exiſted. At preſent, he is Maeſtro di Capella of St. Peter's at Rome, and is the darling of that city; not only for his profeſſional abilities, but complacence, docility, graceful deportment, and good morals. And all that are not prejudiced, ſpeak of him in this manner.

Oh, how delighted has the Counteſs d'Althan been with the chapter which you ſent me for her! She, and all the ladies of her acquaintance, to whom I have read a part of your letter in the garden which you know of, have cried out, in chorus, what I ſhould tell you, what I ſhould do for you, and the Lord knows what. A quire of paper would not contain all the congratulations, ſalutations, remembrances, and panegyrics, with which I am charged. And now I think it high time to finiſh, that the Poſtman might have this letter in time. Adieu, my moſt beloved twin. Preſerve

yourſelf

yourſelf carefully, for your own ſake, for that of your friends, and, particularly, for him who is moſt conſtantly and affectionately yours.

Vienna, June 13th, 1750.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

Two of your moſt dear letters, though of different dates, are arrived together: the one of the 18th of May, and the other of June 9th. They have travelled extremely ſlow; but old as they are, coming from you, they have all the charms of youth. Let us anſwer them chronologically. You have celebrated St. Peter's day, without knowing it. But let me thank you, and explain the myſtery. Not being able to have your March executed in my own houſe, with a ſufficient number of inſtruments, I gave it to the obliging Count d'Althan, and he propoſed having it performed in the great Garden-hall.

On the evening of St. Peter, whoſe name I bear, while the company was playing at cards, and thinking as little of Muſic as of a pilgrimage to Mecca; they were all put into the utmoſt aſtoniſhment, by a terrible clangor of inſtruments, which threw both the card-players and by-ſtanders, into attitudes ridiculous enough for a picture. The ſurpriſe ſoon degenerated into tumult: they threw down their cards, overſet the tables, and ran againſt each other to the field of battle. Here the ſonorous March, and alternate graceful Minuet, tranquillized theſe ſeditious people, who were wholly ſilent, till the inſtruments ceaſed to play, and then burſt into a general applauſe. I then, with a modeſt air, returned thanks to the gentlemen and ladies for the honour they had done this bagatelle. What! they all cried out, is it your Muſic? No, ſaid I, but it is the ſame as if it was mine, being compoſed by my twin-brother. Here I was obliged to give a hiſtory of our twin-ſhip, and it was decided by acclamation, that there was but one Farinelli. Many ſymphonies were played, but nobody would go home till the March had been again performed. Now, my dear

Gemello,

Gemello, I was delighted to be in your company, even during this applauſe. But as to the thoughts, converſations, and dreams which this night may have occaſioned, I waſh my hands of them, and leave them to your conſcience.

I am proud to find, that my letter had the power to move two ſiſters of ſuch different characters. I beg you will reverence in my name, not only the gentle, but the ſcornful Lady. Taſtes are various: hence each may have her merit, in a different way; but, mixed together, they would conſtitute a *dolce piccante*, of the moſt provoking kind. Tell them, that they ſhould not deſpiſe the fondneſs of friends. Their fondneſs is different from that which we have for the fair ſex: the firſt is encreaſed by abſence, the ſecond by proximity. The firſt occupies the mind; the ſecond agitates the blood; but that which does not diſturb the mind, can turn the brain. If all this is ineffectual, tell them, at leaſt, for our credit, that whoever can be an affectionate friend, would not make a contemptible lover.

Our incomparable Counteſs d'Althan ſalutes you without end, and is much pleaſed

by your favourable opinions of D. Gaetano. I have made her laugh with the Macherone Paſticcio, and have no doubt but that it will be mentioned in her letters to Paris, where her nephew at preſent reſides.

The generous partiality with which, according to your letter, I am honoured by the moſt worthy Marquis Enſenada, is merely in conſequence of our near relationſhip. But now you have ſeduced him in my favour, I beg you will not undeceive him. Impoſe upon him ſtill further about my tranſcendent merit; but, whenever you would ſpeak to him, free from all danger of exaggeration, pray tell him of my veneration and gratitude: for I defy you to ſurpaſs the truth on thoſe ſubjects.

I am glad to find that you remember our banker, who has treated us with ſuch great courteſy, that gratitude is due to him. But you are miſtaken in the perſon. I never ſpoke to you concerning Rezzani of Hambro, whom I do not know; but of Meſſrs. *Schmitmer* of Vienna, with whom I have had dealings. Whenever you have an opportunity of ſerving them, I beg you will not confound names.

Sig. Amorevoli, who now ſings on the Vienna ſtage for the ſecond time, ſays, that you formerly invited him to Madrid, but that he could not then leave his court: you however wrote, or employed ſomebody elſe to write, to deſire him to acquaint you when he would be at liberty; with which requeſt he complied, but has received no anſwer. He knows not whether his letter has miſcarried, or whether ſome good friend has not given an unfavourable account of him. He has begged of me to incloſe a letter addreſſed to you, that he may be ſure of its being ſafely tranſmitted to you, and duly anſwered. He would willingly prefer Madrid to London, but ſhould be ſorry to loſe both *. So that he entreats you to favour him with a categorical anſwer. This performer is ſo well known, particularly by yourſelf, that I ſhould do him an injury, in attempting to deſcribe his merit. I ſhall only ſay, that I always hear him with the ſame pleaſure, and that no Tenor, not ex-

* Amorevoli had been in England before: he arrived here in 1741, with Monticelli, and the Viſconti, and remained in this kingdom, till the year 1744. His knowledge, taſte, and expreſſion, well merited the praiſes beſtowed on him by Metaſtaſio.

cepting even Paita, has ſuch an effect on my feelings: ſo that if this man were heard in Spain, particularly being new to that country, my opinion is, that he would do you great honour. It appears to me by the account he gives of his engagements, which I do not very well underſtand, that he believes himſelf at liberty from the Carnival of 1752, to that of 1753.

Well, for the preſent, I think you have had a good doſe; another day I ſhall be ſtill more dry and prolix. Continue to love me, if you would not be thought ungrateful: for I believe it would be difficult to find a ſingle perſon from Madagaſcar to Nova Zembla, who does not know with what eſteem, ſincerity, and affection, I am yours,

Vienna, July 18, 1750.

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

To-day, it certainly is not any buſineſs that we have to tranſact which exacts from me theſe few lines, but mere impatience to embrace you; my hypochondriac affections are in frequent want of a cordial draught of Farinelli,

nelli, otherwiſe my humours would become inſupportable. I know not whether this declaration will pleaſe the two ſiſters who are ſuch enemies to friendſhip; but, at all events, ſome narcotic will be found in your diſpenſary to appeaſe them.

Now I have the pen in my hand, I muſt tell you that, according to advices which I received from the Duke di Salas, your full cheſt ought now to be floating in the gulph of Lyons; and that our cavalry being in the beſt ſtate, from the tenth of laſt month, ought to be at this inſtant in which I am writing, advanced far into France. So that our fleet and our caravan muſt needs be approaching happily to their deſtination. I I wiſh to both, not mine, but your luck, and am extremely impatient to ſee which will get the better.

Our good and admirable Jomelli, is out of his wits to execute your commiſſion well. He has written me a very long letter, in which he ſpeaks of nothing elſe. I am very anxious that he ſhould pleaſe the public of Spain. For your part, who judiciouſly love harmony and *expreſſion*, I have no doubt of your approbation: but in Italy, at preſent, there is a taſte for nothing but extrava-

gance, and vocal ſymphonies; in which we ſometimes hear an excellent violin, flute, or hautbois; but never the ſinging of a human creature. So that muſic is now to excite no other emotion than that of ſurpriſe.' Things are carried to ſuch exceſs, that if not ſoon reformed, we ſhall juſtly become the buffoons of all other nations. Compoſers and performers being only ambitious of tickling the ear, without ever thinking of the hearts of the audience, are generally condemned in all theatres, to the diſgraceful office of degrading the acts of an opera, into *intermezzi* for the dances, which occupy the attention of the people, and chief part of the ſpectators. And it is to you, my good maſter, that this degeneracy is chiefly owing. It is your happy and wonderful powers, which all are ſtriving in vain to imitate. But even to limp after you, requires ſuch legs as none are gifted with.

Mercy on us! I thought I had done, when here comes a letter from you, dated May 27th, which has been opened, and I am glad of it. I ſeal my letters from habit, not the deſire of ſecreſy. Nor ſhall I, in future, ever write a word leſs than I ſhould, if this had never happened. I ever had an

averſion

averſion to ſuch things as fear public examination.

If I do not inſtantly finiſh my letter, it cannot go this evening. Proſtrate at the foot of the throne, not only the poor *Attilio Regolo*, but alſo the humble author. Love and believe me *per omnia ſæcula ſæculorum*.

Vienna, Auguſt 1, 1750.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME.

I RECEIVE two of your letters, one of a date that was once known to God and yourſelf; at preſent, perhaps, to none but God alone. The other is of the 11th of Auguſt. I ought and ſhould have anſwered them in an ample manner, the ſubject required it; but how could I? Being in the country where the company is numerous, I am never ſuffered to be alone, but to ſleep: ſo that there is no poſſibility for a polite man to obtain a rag of ſolitude, either to do good or evil. Content yourſelf, therefore, for the preſent, with a Laconic anſwer, which being written under ſuch inconveniences, may reaſonably aſpire at the merit of a long letter.

I muſt

I muſt confeſs, my dear Gemello, that among all my poetical imaginations, I have never been able to find the mine of diamonds in the mountains of Moravia, which you talk of. Theſe are miracles reſerved for certain divinities of the firſt order. Theſe are words of courſe: ſo that I ſhall not attempt to reconcile their exceſs, with my too great want of merit. But while you are trying, with all the tenderneſs of twinſhip, to render theſe divinities propitious to me, if you cannot honeſtly exalt my merits, ſpeak of my ſubmiſſion, ſpeak of my gratitude, and aſſure yourſelf, that you run no riſk of deviating from truth, however lively and violent may be your expreſſions. Accuſtomed as you have long been to inhabit my heart, you know its moſt ſecret receſſes, and are able to judge of the ſincerity of its emotions.

Now your royal oracle has pronounced in favour of my Attilio Regolo, I defy Sophocles, Euripides, and all the Athenian Parnaſſus. The ſublime ſuffrage which I can boaſt, is worth that of all ancient Greece. But my dear Gemello, in our moſt recondite confidence, let me diſcloſe to you my wonder. Without injuring the angelic penetration

of

of your divinity, I muſt confeſs, I never ſhould have flattered myſelf, that the auſterity of my Regulus could ever have been ſuffered in that ſphere. The delicacy of ſex, is naturally averſe to it, and royal indulgence and delights do not accuſtom the palate to the harſhneſs of that rigid Roman virtue which I have endeavoured to delineate in my Attilio. A very uncommon ſolidity of character is neceſſary to vanquiſh in this manner, both ſex, and education. Oh, my fortunate Gemello! If I was capable of envy, you would be the object of it. I thank you for the defence which you have made of us poor modern Romans: but conſcience ſecretly reproves me. Whoever places us below the ancients, has reaſon on his ſide; and the reflection is worthy of him who made it.

But did any tyrant of Syracuſe or Agrigentum, ever torment a poor gentleman, as you torment me for an opera? And have I not reaſon to call you a marine monſter! I begin to think you are breeding, as ſuch a longing fit never appertained to the maſculine gender. You then believe, that continually tormenting my poor brains, is invention. Do you regard it as a fable, that I

live

live in the ſervice of a ſovereign, who delights in poetry, and, luckily, from exceſs of clemency, particularly of mine; yet during five years, I have not been in a ſituation to write a ſingle verſe in compliance with her repeated inſinuations! Do you believe that I ſhould not have been deſirous of gratifying a twin brother, and of procuring the favour of ſuch exalted patrons? Rather, in charity, believe that I have thought and ſtill think of it; and that if it is not accompliſhed, it will not be from want of zeal, but from a mere phyſical and invincible impoſſibility. The ceſſation of all amuſements for a conſiderable time, occaſioned here by an unhappy event, of which I ſhall not ſpeak through reſpect for my miſtreſs's moſt juſt and laudable affliction, permits me at preſent, to think of undertaking, leiſurely, ſome poetical compoſition. I ſhall attempt the ford; heaven grant that I may not be left in the paſſage.

Jomelli wrote me word, ſometime ago, that he received an act of *Demetrio*, with which he was extremely pleaſed. And my brother at Rome tells me, that he had heard the duet: ſo that he is at work. Jomelli, however, from mere complacence, is deſi-

rous

rous of pleaſing every body, and every body wants to employ him. He muſt, therefore, be ſtimulated; I do it, and you muſt not fail to do it by means of your excellent ſecretary Marcheſini, whom I now ſeize the opportunity of ſaluting. I beg you to preſent my invariable reſpects to the worthy Marquis of Enſanada, and tell him, that if a motion is not given to the waters of Parthenope in my favour, they will be quite ſtagnant, to which they ſeem much inclined. I am unworthy of ſo much trouble, but the vanquiſhing my evil fortune, is an enterpriſe to tempt Spaniſh generoſity.

The moſt excellent lady of the manſion, and all her numerous gueſts, charge me with compliments to you. I would give you a liſt of the candidates of both ſexes, but neither time nor my head will ſtand by me; ſo I haſten to conclude, with my ancient and moſt conſtant affection.

Frain, September 15, 1750.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR letter of the 3d of laſt month, in which you tell me of the happy ſucceſs of our little Pegaſian expedition, is arrived, and gives me the greateſt pleaſure, in the midſt of the moſt cruel perſecutions of my nervous affections; which, this year, are more obſtinate, indiſcrete, and intolerable than uſual. I ſhall not deſcribe to you my preſent ſufferings, as it would too much excite your pity, and encreaſe my own impatience. In ſhort, all I have for it, is heroically to tolerate the preſent, and force myſelf to hope for future good. I ſigh to convince your glorious patrons, if not of my abilities, at leaſt of my zeal and attention to obey them worthily. I am extremely impatient to hear what was the fate of the laſt expedition in their opinion, and, afterwards, in that of the public.

As ſoon as ever my complaints grant me a truce, I ſhall obtain great honour by the beautiful *Arietta* that you have ſent me, which

which by merely mumbling it between the teeth, reminds me of my incomparable Gemello. In the mean time I have had it ſung by Sig. Tedeſchi detto Amadoſi, a Soprano deſerving of much eſteem; as, in a room, particularly, he is, in my opinion, ſuperior to all thoſe who at preſent tread the ſtage in the reſt of Europe; and here, at court, and among the nobility, he is juſtly in very high favour. This performer comes to entertain and ſolace me in my doleful hypochondriacs: and when your muſic is to be ſung, I aſſume the character of Maeſtro, and he has the patience to bear with me.

I ſhould write much more, but my head is diſobedient. So that after aſſuring you of the moſt partial ſalutations of yours, and my moſt worthy Counteſs d'Althan, I embrace you with my wonted affection.

Vienna, December 13, 1750.

This was the laſt letter of the year 1750 to Farinelli, which appears in the collection. Before we advance further, it will be neceſſary to return back a few months, in order to reſume the poet's correſpondence with

Sig.

Sig. Filipponi, to whom he generally writes with much vivacity and good humour.

LETTER X.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

NEITHER my long reſidence in the country, the idle carnival, nor the troubleſome and lying compliments of the ſeaſon, have prevented me from writing ſooner; but the want of neceſſary, uſeful, or, at leaſt, amuſing, materials, joined to the natural horror of a vacuum, which I feel in common with mankind, particularly in letters, and in the purſe. Think not that our friendſhip can ſuffer diminution, from this interval of ſilence. Its roots are ſo ſtrong, ſo ancient, and ſo deep, that they can well bear a dry ſeaſon or two, without injury. It is not the plane tree, the palm, or the oak, but the leek, the lettuce, and the radiſh, that periſh, if not conſtantly watered.

It is very true, that there are many different propoſals for reprinting my works; but, to tell you the truth, I feel no temptation to encourage any of them, unleſs induced by the pleaſure of ſeeing my children more magnificently

magnificently dreſſed. I know not, as yet, who is moſt likely to excite this paternal frailty; and I ſhall not communicate the few inedited pieces I can find, nor engage myſelf in the painful taſk of an exact and general correction, in order to encreaſe the number of bad or middling editions which are already multiplied more than is neceſſary.

You have perhaps already peruſed my *Attillio Regolo*. Count Canale ſometime ago, ſent a copy of it to Turin. I wiſh to have your opinion of it. If you want to know mine, here it is.

Though according to letters from Saxony, the tranquillity of northern affections has been much diſturbed by it at Dreſden, and though they write me word, that the performers of S. Samuele at Venice, have repreſented it with great ſucceſs, I am not certain that it will ever occupy the firſt place among my moſt popular dramas; yet I think it the moſt ſolid, the higheſt finiſhed, and abounding with the feweſt defects of any of my operas; and, in ſhort, regard it as that, which in preference to all the others, I would preſerve, if only *one* could be ſaved from deſtruction.

You have ſent back the Count and Counteſs Canale very thin; though in common honeſty you ought to have returned to us all that we conſigned to you. We ſhall therefore not let you have them again in a hurry.

I am glad that you are pleaſed with the country mouſe (*g*); but this kind of labour is not worth the pains it coſts. To do it well, requires genius; and whoever has a capital of his own, is unwilling to reduce himſelf to the meagre praiſe of having brought to ight the labours of others.

Forget not to keep me alive in the memory of the moſt worthy Count della Rocca, and the Marquis Ormea, whom I love and venerate as much as they deſerve, that is, without end. I recommend myſelf, to the pious fervor of your amiable prieſteſs, and am &c. (*h*)

Vienna, February 20, 1750.

(*g*) This alludes to his tranſlation of the ſixth ſatire of the ſecond book of Horace, which did not appear in any edition of his works till after his deceaſe. It is now generally placed in the thirteenth or fourteenth volume, with his other poſthumous works. The tranſlation is in *Terze Rime*, the verſification of Dante, and is extremely cloſe and happy. The original text is printed at the bottom of the page.

(*h*) This was a title which he always, in pleaſantry, gave to Signora Filipponi.

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

I OWE you an anſwer to two charming letters, and wiſhed to pay you with intereſt; but have not had time to attempt it. And I now ſnatch a moment that is hardly ſufficient for the acknowledgement of my debt, and prevent proſcription. If I were to tell you all my impediments, you would be indulgent; but their detail would occupy more room than a categorical anſwer; and the excuſe would be more tireſome than the ſuppoſed negligence.

I thank you for your partial analyſis of my *Regulus*; you gratify my pious prurience by it, as this opera is the Benjamin of all the reſt. The German actors here have repreſented it in their own language, with great applauſe; but I have never yet had the courage to go near it. The Teutonic air, in a Roman hero, ſeems to me like the boar in the ſea, and the dolphin in the wood, which Horace laughs at.

You have procured me the good opinion of the moſt worthy Marchioneſs of Lenzi; take care to preſerve it for me; repreſent to her how highly I think myſelf honoured by her notice; and how much for her ſake I am grieved, at having ſo little merited her favour, unleſs ſhe places to my account, the infinite reſpect I have for her.

Vienna, June 16, 1750.

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

A MOST agreeable letter from you was delivered to me in Moravia, at the ſame time as a command from court to return to Vienna, in order to write and direct the repreſentation of a very ſhort drama, which is to be ſung by three Arch-dutcheſſes, in celebration of their moſt auguſt mother's birth-day. This occupation, more indeed of body than mind, has obliged me to make a ſhort parentheſis in the midſt of all my civil, œconomical, political, literary, and voluptuous affairs. You muſt not, therefore, accuſe me of negligence, for not anſwering your letter ſooner, nor for doing it now in ſo ſummary

mary a way; as I am obliged to divide myſelf among a great number of creditors.

The printer of Turin does my writings great honour, in ſuppoſing that an edition in 12mo, little different from innumerable others already publiſhed, would meet with purchaſers. His plan does not tempt my vanity. The inedited pieces which I have ſtill by me, have occaſion for the ax and the file; therefore the time neceſſary for preparing them, would vex him, and fatigue me. As to the order in which they ſhould appear, I have nothing more to ſay, than that I wiſh all the writings of my early youth might be placed at the end of the work; but as the reſt have no connexion with each other, they may be diſpoſed at pleaſure. Tell him, if it is not too late for him to profit from the information, that I have lately received petitions of the ſame kind from Leipſic, Paris, and Piacenza; and have made the ſame anſwer.

In order to be doing ſomething to remind you of me, I ſhall give directions for an excellent little picture of myſelf, which is now in my poſſeſſion, to be copied for you.

Vienna, October 22, 1750

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

I SHOULD have anſwered your laſt letter ſooner, had I not waited till the picture was finiſhed; and now, it being Chriſtmas Eve, I muſt be ſhort, as the ſeveral offices, active and paſſive, have abſorbed the whole day.

I ſend you one picture of me in wax, which is moſt excellently done. Another in miniature, which I have had copied three times; and, at length, with tolerable ſucceſs. It is now in the hands of a moſt tedious engraver. When finiſhed, you ſhall have a print likewiſe from this. Adieu. I write in company, and therefore can add nothing more than uſual good wiſhes.

Vienna, December 24, 1750.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME

DURING my ſilence, I had to combat with my complaints, and with the muſes. I have written an opera, by command of my

my moſt auguſt Patron; I finiſhed it but yeſterday, and you are to regard my writing to you to-day, as no ſmall mark of my favour.

In order to appeaſe you, I encloſe half a dozen Metaſtaſios, upon whom you may ſatiate your vengeance, and then reſume your good humour. Adieu. Make my reverences to the amiable prieſteſs; look upon this as a long letter, and try to fancy that it merits ſuch complaiſance.

Vienna, April 19, 1751.

LETTER XV.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

NOTWITHSTANDING appearances are ſo much againſt me, my plagues and infirmities were ſuch, as not to permit me to ſend you even two lines by laſt Saturday's poſt, in anſwer to your moſt agreeable letter of the 25th of November, which I received in the uſual way; and at preſent, I know not whether my eagerneſs to write to you will be ſufficient to ſubdue my difficulties. But let us ſpeak of pleaſanter things.

The Miniſter Plenipotentiary, Don Antonio di Azlor, from your court, is arrived. I have been twice at his door in vain; and he has been once at mine, with the ſame ſucceſs. But at length we have met, and we now ſee one another almoſt every evening, at the aſſemblies in Althan houſe. He has already had an audience of my moſt Auguſt Patrons, and I am told, has been moſt graciouſly received. He pleaſes me extremely; and ſuch ſeems to have been his fate with the nobility, and *corps diplomatique*. He has an agreeable ſerioufneſs in his aſpect, an openneſs in ſpeaking, and ſo noble, courteous, and judicious an addreſs, that I hope he will worthily and uſefully ſuſtain the character with which he is honoured. There is no aſſerting any thing poſitive for the future; but whoever begins well, has half performed his taſk. I have interrogated him very much concerning yourſelf, as all are ſolicitous about what is moſt dear to them, and I am extremely pleaſed with his anſwers. He aſſures me, that your proſperity has not in the leaſt altered the ſweetneſs and moderation of your character. A rock, according to ancient and modern examples, extremely difficult

to

to avoid; and much more amidſt the favours, than the perſecutions of fortune. He has aſſured me, that though mounted to ſuch an enviable ſituation, you have not an enemy. To obtain forgiveneſs for ſuch proſperity, I can eaſily conceive how wiſe, how diſintereſted, and how beneficent muſt be your conduct. I congratulate you on theſe ineſtimable characteriſtics, which are your own, and not the gifts of fortune; and I congratulate myſelf for having known and loved you, before you had given ſuch illuſtrious proofs of your eſtimable and amiable qualities.

If you knew JOMELLI perſonally, you would not wonder at the indolence of which you complain. He has a tranquil and ſerene mind, and loves to ſaunter at his eaſe, and indulge the fatneſs of his well-fed body; giving way to every impulſe that can ſave him the trouble of reſiſtance: ſo that he is always influenced by thoſe that are neareſt him. Grieve at this on your own account, if you will, or rather deplore in him this moſt troubleſome defect, but never believe that he ever meant to deceive you. A fraud would involve his pacific diſpoſition in too much trouble.

I would

I would ſay a thouſand things more, but my head has proteſted againſt it, for ſometime. Adieu.

Vienna, January 9, 1751.

LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

You began the world by performing miracles: and it is not one of a common ſort, to make me write verſes at this time of life, when I have more reaſon to execrate my impertinent infirmities, which plague me more and more every day. And you will perform another miracle, if they ſhould let me finiſh this letter.

Here is Didone for you, abridged, as much as poſſible, without injuring it too much, and even corrected in ſome place. In the firſt act, I have not been able to make much uſe of the ſheers; in the ſecond, but little; in the third, however, they have been very active. The number of airs is that preſcribed by yourſelf. But in the third act, as Jarbas, after the combat, would have come in without an air, and there is a change of ſcene, I have written two verſes which

which connect with the ſenſe and ſituation of the recitative; but if ſung, *arcibreviſſima*, to a *Cavatina*, they will give ſpirit to the entrance of the perſonage, and afford the inſtruments an opportunity of ſeconding the mutation, without lengthening the opera a minute. The Licenza *(i)*, if ſelf-love does not ſeduce me, ſeems not to partake of my ſuffering; which only ſays, that it is all the little I ſhould have been able to do, if I had not been ſo tormented. Pray let the machiniſt read over and over again the remarks prefixed to the MS. that he may underſtand and faithfully expreſs your ideas and mine.

I have received by the favour of the worthy miniſter plenipotentiary from your court, free even from the heavy expences and inexorable demands of this cuſtom-houſe, your magnificent preſent of ſnuff, porcelain, bark, vanilla, and other unknown articles. I return thanks to the generous donor. And wiſh I may ever poſſeſs the faculty of meriting ſuch enviable kindneſs. If my head

(*i*) Epilogue, or *Finale*, generally a compliment to the ſovereign for whoſe court, and at whoſe expence, the opera is performed; like the prologues to the operas of Lulli, written by Quinault for Louis XIV.

would

would permit me to write much, this would be an exceſſive long chapter. It will be ſo ſtill, when I am able. In the mean time, be aſſured, that I am unable to ſay whether I am more glad or more confuſed. I hope that the Marquis d'Enſenada, to whom I beg my moſt humble reſpects, will believe this truth; and that you will do the ſame.

You wrote me word ſometime ago, that I ſhould find, in a flaſk of earth, *an herb that was good for the breaſt, and a diuretic.* Now inſtead of this herb, I have found a white ſubſtance reſembling ſoap, but what it is, no one in Vienna can tell. If you wiſh that your preſent ſhould not be uſeleſs, I beg you will not forget, in your anſwer, to tell me its *name*, virtue, and the manner of uſing it. However, if it has been ſpoiled on the road, I muſt beg you to ſend me another flaſk.

The Counteſs d' Althan thanks you for the little caniſter of ſnuff; but, luckily, it is too good for ladies; ſo that it will come to my ſhare. Adieu; you have performed the ſecond miracle, at which I rejoice, and am, &c.

Vienna, January 30, 1751.

LET-

LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

You will wonder at my delay in anſwering your letter; but when you know the cauſe, you will wonder ſtill more, at my being able to ſteal a moment to write theſe two lines. After my laſt letter, I went into Moravia for the country air, which my health, more impaired than uſual, required. In the beginning of Autumn, we were aſſailed among the mountains by a winter extraordinary; ſo furniſhed with ice, with wind, and all the ornaments of December, that in deſpite of ſtoves, chimneys, and pellices lined with fur, there was no one of the company who eſcaped a cough, accompanied, more or leſs, with its uſual attendants; and I, not leſs favoured than the reſt, had a due ſhare of theſe bleſſings. But at laſt, when the ſeaſon began to grow milder, and I hoped to recover my ſtrength, comes an expreſs with an Imperial mandate to transfer myſelf to Vienna, as it was determined that the opera for the ladies, which was to have come out in December, ſhould be repreſented in October. So that, with the bleſſed remains of

my defluxion and other numerous complaints, I am here in the midſt of a crowd of tumultuous applications. For beſides inſtructing four young ladies, who are quite novices, both in the language and uſe of the ſtage, the weight of the director of the muſic falls on my poor ſhoulders, without my deriving from it either honour or advantage. This is one of the court phenomena, in which, without the leaſt crime, I ſhall ſuffer all the penalty. You know what it is to be a ſtage rudder; it is therefore needleſs to deſcribe to you my ſituation. The opera will be brought on the ſtage in eight or ten days. I ſend you the words before they are publiſhed, not only as my dear Gemello has the preference in this, as well as in the reſt of my heart, but becauſe it ſeems very fit for his purpoſe. Adieu. A crowd of people are waiting for me.

Vienna, October 18, 1751.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

You muſt imagine, that, till to-day, I could neither have the book, nor a moment

to finiſh this letter; which is the exact truth. I ſhall not plague myſelf in trying to perſuade you of this, becauſe you have been often in my caſe; but with political and œconomical circumſtances, much more favourable than mine!

This evening the opera appears on the ſtage for the firſt time, therefore addio.

A propos to the ſtage, at Naples my buſineſs is pleaſantly ſung. They have told my agent, that when the archbiſhop of Montreal is provided for, *ſomething will be given to me.* The archbiſhopric of Montreal becomes vacant by the death of Cardinal Acquaviva, and God knows which of our nephews may live to ſee him provided for. Then, my beloved Gemello, what are we to underſtand by this precious *ſomething?* But I have no time for declamation; and you may eaſily conceive whether I have been able to write verſes. Adieu, once more; they are all crucifying me at this moment.

Vienna, October 27, 1751.

LET-

LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

YOURS from the eſcurial, of the 12th, of laſt month, afflicts me with the news of the bad ſtate of your dear health, and aggravates my own ſufferings; which amidſt my plagues in attending the rehearſals of *Il Re Paſtore*, were more intolerable than uſual. One of the diſagreeable effects of this tumult, is my not having been able to ſecond the wiſhes of my beloved Gemello, in writing ſuch a feſtival drama as he had ſuggeſted to me. I had intended to devote myſelf to his ſervice in the country, but I was there attacked by a fever and defluxion, on my arrival; and before I was recovered, comes an expreſs which obliged me to gallop to Vienna, where I alone was forced to practice every trade, or rather to be *Jack of all Trades*. And amidſt my fatigues and the enormous coldneſs of the Theatre; my ill-cured defluxion has taken ſuch deep root, and entered into an alliance with my other complaints ſo cloſely, that it affects my ſpirits as well as my health. I comfort myſelf with the hope that *Il Re Paſtore*, which I ſent you

the

the inſtant it came out of the preſs, will anſwer your purpoſe extremely well. It is gay, tender, amorous, ſhort; and has, indeed, all the neceſſary requiſites for your wants. No repreſentation here is remembered to have extorted ſuch univerſal applauſe. The ladies who performed in it, did wonders, particularly as to action. The muſic is ſo graceful, ſo well adapted and ſo lively, that it enchants by its own merit, without injuring the paſſion of the perſonage; and pleaſes exceſſively. I ſhould inſtantly have had it copied and ſent to you; but as the four ladies are all *ſopranos*, and there is no part for any other kind of voice, except that for Aleſſandro, which is a tenor, I did not think it could be of uſe to you, without alterations. If ever you ſhould wiſh to have it, read the drama with attention, caſt the parts; and I will prevail on the compoſer himſelf to adjuſt it to your purpoſe, or new ſet whatever you pleaſe. The author is Sig. *Giuſeppe Bono:* he was born at Vienna of Italian parents, and ſent by Charles VI. to ſtudy muſic under Leo, with whom he paſſed his firſt youth*. I know two other German

* This is the firſt time that the name of this compoſer has come to my knowledge; of his works I am ſtill ignorant; however,

man compoſers, Gluck, and Wagenſeil. The firſt has ſurpriſing fire, but is mad; and the other is a great harpſichord player. Gluck compoſed an opera for Venice, which was very unfortunate. He has compoſed others here with various ſucceſs. I am not a man to pretend to judge of him.

My dear Gemello, I can write no more, my head rebels. Adieu, if you wiſh me to be well, ſhew me a good example; and believe that I am more vexed than you can be, at my inability to oblige you. You know ſo well how ſincerely I ſpeak, that it is unneceſſary to enforce this aſſertion.

Vienna, November 16, 1751.

Soon after the performance of *Attilio Regolo* at Dreſden, the *Mingotti*, who there firſt diſtinguiſhed herſelf in the part of *Attilia*, in that opera, being invited to the theatre royal at Naples, to ſing in the ſame drama, obtained a letter of recommendation to the Princeſs di Belmonte, from Metaſtaſio,

however, the character given of him here by Metaſtaſio, on whoſe probity and good taſte we may rely, aſſigns him an honourable ſtation among compoſers whoſe abilities reſt only on tradition, though his productions may never have penetrated into this country.

which has not been inſerted in the poet's correſpondence publiſhed at Nice, but appears in Sig. Saverio Mattei's *Memoirs*, which, though ſhort, contain many curious anecdotes relative to our Lyric Bard's private life, that, previous to this publication, were not to be found elſewhere (*b*). A ſketch of the life of the celebrated ſinger and actreſs, *Mingotti*, has already been given elſewhere, from her own mouth (*c*); but as this letter is not mentioned there, and is ſuch an unequivocal teſtimony of the favour in which ſhe ſtood with the poet in this early period of her celebrity, it ſeems to be connected with the preceding account of *Attilio*.

LETTER XX.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE.

" SIGNORA *Regina Mingotti*, one of the principal ornaments of the vocal band at Dreſden, being engaged at Naples in the

(*b*) *Memorie per ſervire alla vita del Metaſtaſio raccolte da Saverio Mattei. Edizione prima. in colle.* 1785.

(*c*) Preſent State of Muſic in Germany, &c. vol 1. Art. MUNICH.

ſame rank, has not eſcaped the epidemic deſire of being furniſhed with a letter from me to your excellence. This requeſt, however, would have been fruitleſs, had ſhe not moſt wickedly, and maliciouſly, hit upon the following expedient for vanquiſhing my well known repugnance to give way to ſuch applications. When ſhe left the court of Dreſden, what does ſhe do, but poſt away to Vienna; and without giving me the leaſt previous notice of my danger, early one fine morning, preſents herſelf in my room, and in a military habit, preceded only by her fame, and accompanied by all the graces of youth, vivacity, and talents, and what is ſtill worſe, entitled to the chief credit of the ſucceſs of my *Attilio* in Dreſden. Now tell me, madam, with your uſual candour, if ever you heard of ſo cunning a muſical trick? It was like putting a knife to the throat of a poor chriſtian. I know not not what Socrates, Cato, or Ariſtides would have done in ſuch a caſe; but this I know, that I could not help writing the letter, and even devoutly thanking Heaven that ſhe had the moderation to limit her pretenſions to a letter only.

This

This letter has no date, but it muſt have been written in 1751, when *Attilio* was firſt repreſented at Naples: as a letter written that year by the poet, to the ſame princeſs, to repreſs the too ſanguine expectations of his firſt patroneſs, for the ſucceſs of this opera, appears in Sig. Mattei's Memoirs, which is the more curious, as it contains Metaſtaſio's opinion of the talents of the admirable tenor ſinger, *Raaff*, then young, and whoſe fame like that of *Mingotti*, was ſcarcely fledged.

LETTER XXI.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE.

THOUGH my *Regulus* is an opera, of which I am the leaſt aſhamed; and though my dear *Raaff* is ſuch a performer as cannot be paralleled; I believe that they are not made for each other, and that, joined together, they will both be ſacrificed. That is to ſay, the part of *Regulus* will ruin my poor *Raaff*, and *Raaff* will be the ruin of the part, and of the opera. This drama cannot ſucceed, unleſs the principal perſonage pleaſes extremely; and our dear *Raaff* is phyſically

unable to ſupport this weight. The reaſons are numerous, founded on experience; and I hope that your excellence will believe a man who venerates you, and eſteems *Raaff* as much as he merits, that is to ſay, exceſſively.—Beſides, that immenſe ſpace in the great theatre of *San Carlo*, will abſorb all thoſe inimitable graces, and that wonderful agility, which render this charming ſinger ſo admirable in a room: indeed he has ſplit upon this rock elſewhere, in theatres three times leſs ſpacious than this; ſo that I can hardly hope that he will ſhare a better fate in future.

The event, however, to the great joy of Metaſtaſio, did not correſpond with his expectations; the incomparable *Raaff* having overcome every obſtacle; and the predictions of the Princeſs of Belmonte, were better verified than thoſe of the poet; who by the firm confidence which the princeſs placed in the abilities of *Raaff*, began to doubt of the rectitude of his own judgment, before the opera was brought on the Neapolitan ſtage: and anticipating his defence in another letter on the ſubject to the ſame princeſs, he ſays, "wherever my matchleſs *Raaff* can be heard,

heard, he will doubtleſs raviſh the hearts of all the audience; but if the ſize of this theatre is ſo enormous as it has been deſcribed to me, it is impoſſible to imagine that the exquiſite delicacy of his taſte and expreſſion will not be loſt, and in ſhort, all the wonderful and peculiar graces of his ſtyle of ſinging. You, madam, will ſay, that there is no reaſoning againſt facts: and I ſhall reply, that men are obliged to reaſon, but not to propheſy; particularly about theatrical matters, as they often elude all prudence and conjecture, and leſs frequently diſgrace miſtakes, than credit predictions."

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